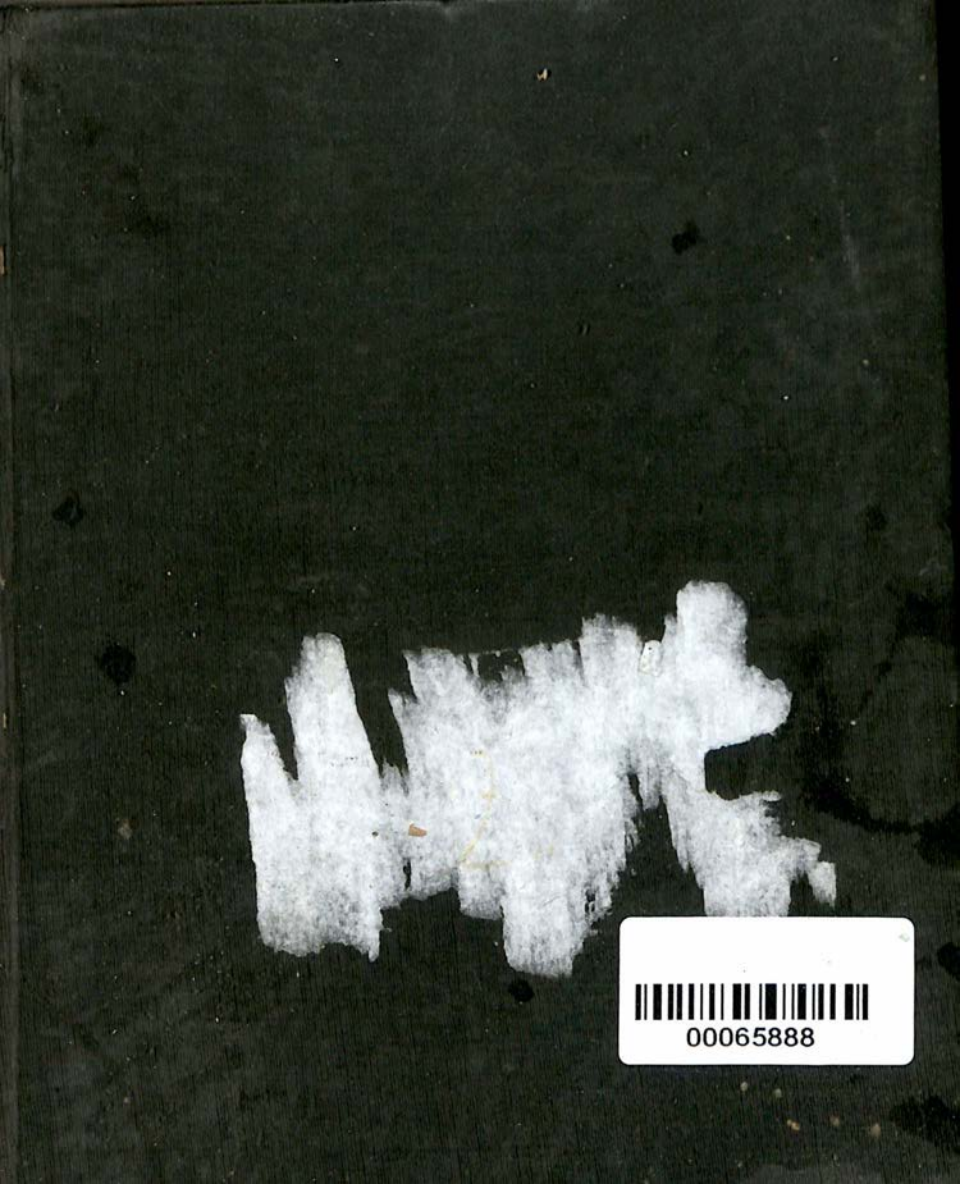


00065888

THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
Town Hall, Bombay.

Digitized with financial assistance from

HT Parekh
FOUNDATION

An Initiative by
HDFC
WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 15 October, 2018

"JONES"

Frontispiece

Lonely Summer in Kashmir

B 925

By

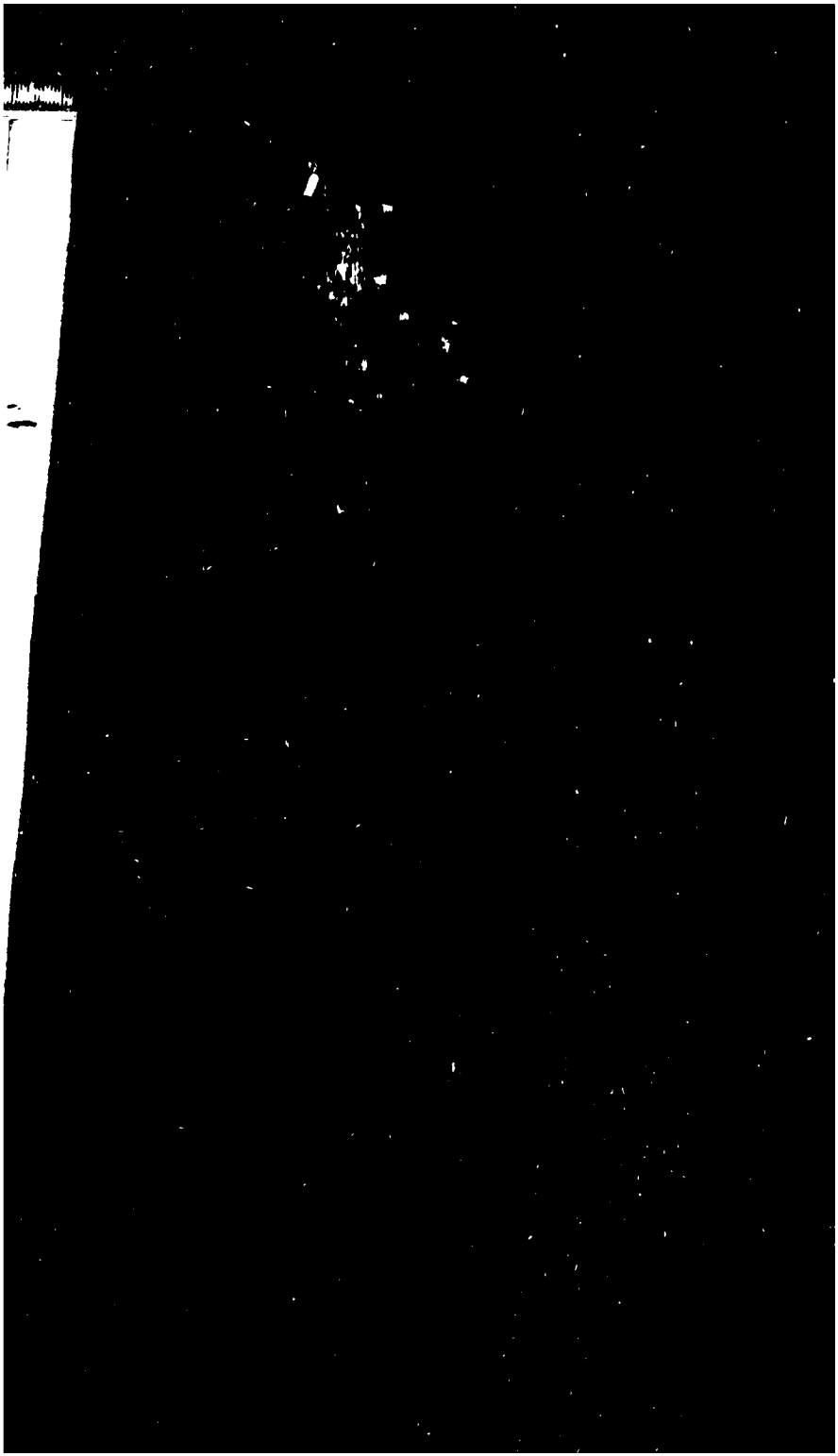
Margaret Cotter Morison

65888

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

Rab. L-3

London
Bickworth and Co.
Henrietta Street, Covent Garden



A Lonely Summer in Kashmir

B 725

By

Margaret Cotter Morison

65888

Rx6.K.3

London
Duckworth and Co.
3 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden
1904

F1 46
Mo/Lon
65888

00065888

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
At the Ballantyne Press

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	Alone in Kashmir	1
II.	Visit to Payech	10
III.	Achibal	20
IV.	History of Kashmir	33
V.	Martand	64
VI.	Concerning Jones	73
VII.	Life at Pahlgam	88
VIII.	Up the Liddar Valley	103
IX.	Liddarwart and Kolohoi	111
X.	Tar Sar	124
XI.	Back to Srinagar	141
XII.	Gulmarg	149
XIII.	Trial by Teapot	159
XIV.	Hotel Life at Gulmarg	175

Illustrations

Irrigation Well	*To face page*	144
House on a Canal	„	146
Women Washing by the Bank	„	146
A Sweet Shop	„	148
View from the Circular Road, Gulmarg	„	158
A Doonga	„	192
A Boat Girl	„	194
Kashmiri Boat Woman	„	197
Balti Carriers in the Sind Valley	„	202
Ruined Temples in the Wangat Valley	„	202
Avalanche in the Sind Valley	„	205
The Sind Valley	„	216
Camping near Haramuk	„	225
View of Haramuk from the Gangabal Lake	„	225
Fishing on the Jhelum	„	250
Rice Boats on the River	„	250
Village by the Jhelum	„	252
Near the Wular Lake	„	252
A Kashmir Bridge	„	255
Houses by the River, Srinagar	„	255
The Lal Mundi, above Srinagar	„	257
Canal in the Dhal	„	261
Water-Course in the Nishat Bagh	„	261
A Canal Scene, Srinagar	„	265
The Pir Panjal Pass into Kashmir	„	267
Bridge at Kohala, with Tonga in Foreground	„	269
Rest-House at Dulai ("Honeymoon Cottage")	„	270
Rest-House at Uri	„	270

THE CHENAR BAGH, SRINAGAR

Face p. ix

APOLOGIA

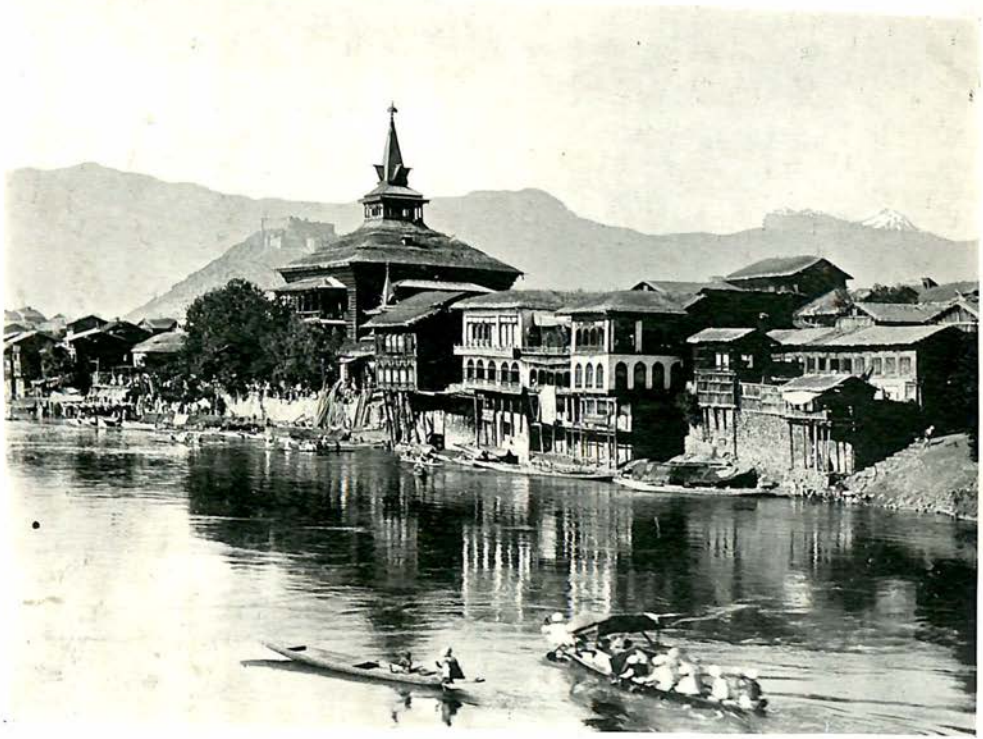
In giving these recollections of a lonely summer spent in Kashmir to the public, I feel that more than a passing word of apology is needed for the egoistic tone running through them; with the best will in the word to eliminate it, the first person singular reappears with monotonous frequency. There are several reasons which partly account for, but cannot totally excuse this. In the first place, the very essence of travelling in an undeveloped country tends to selfishness; a wanderer in Europe can give his whole mind and time to the historic sights around him, and sink himself in his surroundings, secure of finding ample supply of food and shelter when he returns to his hotel at night. In sparsely civilised countries it is different; the would-be explorer spends weeks beforehand making careful plans for his own comfort and security, and he who caters for himself best, far from being despised for his egoism, receives ungrudging admiration from all similarly situated travellers. The whole reason and object of his surrounding body-guard seems to be to minister to his comfort; for him heavily loaded coolies toil daily along mountain paths, tired servants hurry to prepare his food at night; the very scenery seems

turned on for his pleasure. It is almost impossible in such surroundings for him not to fall into the prevailing illusion that he is a little tin god on wheels.

In my case circumstances were aggravated by the fact of my having no travelling companion; daily, for weeks at a time, was I thrown among absolutely novel surroundings, with no one with whom to comment upon them in a familiar tongue. From default of natural conversation I perforce grew garrulous on paper.

These jottings were for the most part written to beguile the long wait when the day's march was done and before the tents had come in; the notebook travelled inside the tiffin basket, and when the contents of the latter were exhausted then pencil and paper helped to pass the time.

To those who know Kashmir or who seek for stirring reading, this book will have no interest; I ran into no dangers, I climbed no inaccessible peaks; but there may be some people who are anxious themselves to visit the country and gain some idea of it before starting; there are others again who prefer to do their travelling by their own fireside, and to such, the day-to-day record of events which were set down as they happened, may give a clearer idea of the mode of life in this far-off land than a book of more active adventure. It is to the kind indulgence of such readers as these that this record of A Lonely Summer in Kashmir is respectfully submitted.



A TEMPLE IN SRINAGAR

Face p. 1

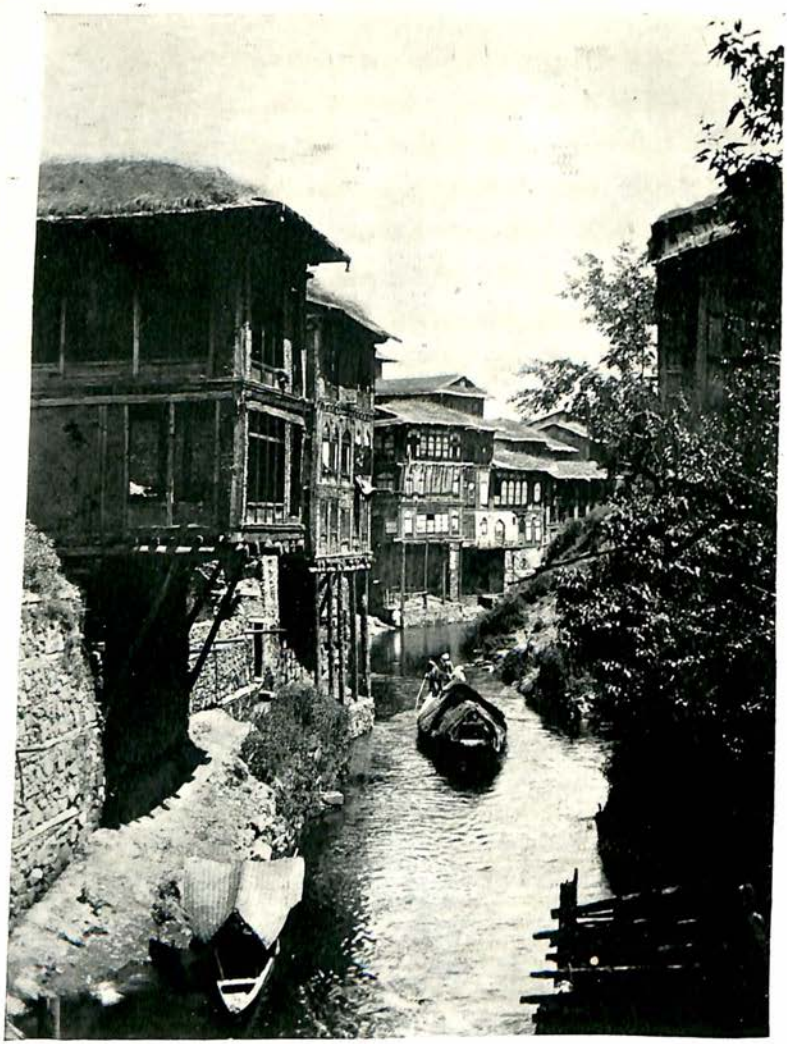
CHAPTER I

ALONE IN KASHMIR

THE question I had to decide when at the end of May 1901, I was suddenly, through no fault of my own, thrown entirely on my own resources in Kashmir, with no friend in the land and no one with whom to travel or chum, was whether to hang around Srinagar or the hill-station of Gulmarg, and by mixing persistently with others try to forget my own loneliness, or whether to follow out my original plan of seeing something of the country, and explore alone the mountains and side-valleys as I had intended doing in the company of my friend. I had as yet seen only two sides of Kashmir life, that of the river, amid lovely scenery, on a house-boat; and the life of the English residents in the capital, Srinagar. The river life is exquisite for a time, especially in the spring; the trees all bursting into life, the white blossom to be seen everywhere, the river

banks and fields blue with iris, the chains of snow-capped mountains on either hand which unfold their beauty slowly as the boat goes winding up the valley. After the long and tiring journey into Kashmir nothing more delightful at first can be imagined ; but after a time this lazy life is found to have its limitations ; there is not enough variety for one actively inclined, the novelty of watching the boatmen punt, tow and paddle the boat wears off, there is no other exercise to be had but to walk along the bank while the boat slowly follows behind, and every day the mountains look more alluring and seem to invite one into their fastnesses and to leave the sluggish river life.

Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir and the only big town in the country, is a place full of life and picturesqueness, which captivates the visitor by its novelty and perpetually amuses him by the many quaint similarities to places seen before. With the polo-ground, tennis-courts, and smartly dressed ladies, one might think oneself in an ordinary Indian station ; at the Residency garden-parties, where croquet is played on the softest of lawns, and strawberries and cream dispensed under cool spreading trees, any one would think himself at a country house in England ; on the



THE MAR CANAL, SRINAGAR

Face p. 3

river above the town, where house-boats are crowded close together for over a mile, the sight recalls Henley a few days before the regatta ; a row down the town where houses and temples line the banks, where gracefully carved wooden balconies overhang the water, where men and women loiter chattering on the steps, and half the population lives in boats, brings back faint memories of Venice. But a visit to the Dhal Lake, with its willow-lined water canals and unique floating gardens, or a stiff climb up the hill, called the Takht-i-Suleiman, to obtain a panoramic view of the city, so green in spring-time, with grass growing thickly on all the roofs ; and lastly, the perpetual swarm of merchants round one's boat thrusting themselves and their goods in at the window repeating their never ceasing cry of : " Only see, lady, only see ; don't buy, Mem-sahib "—these are suggestive of Srinagar, and only Srinagar, for their like is seen in no other part of the earth.

To be sure my own recent experience had not put me in a mood to appreciate all this ; for in the fortnight since my friend had left I had spent most of the time at the telegraph office, wiring and being wired to. No sooner did a message come announcing her return, than almost the next moment

another would follow contradicting it; friends at Simla would send me urgent invitations to forsake my loneliness and join them at once, then before they had had time to receive my warmly worded acceptance, that plan would crumble to the dust, and they would wire to ask if I had any alternative plans. Alternative plans were not likely to be plentiful with one who owned not half a dozen friends over the million and odd square miles of the peninsula, so after a dozen such messages had passed between us, all to no purpose, I was seized with a great longing to get away into the wilds where the wire might cease from troubling and the weary be at rest. It seemed better to be alone in the hills than hanging as a stranger on to the outskirts of a community, and I had already abundantly tested in Srinagar the truth of the saying that there is no loneliness so desolate as that to be felt in a crowd; so I determined to be off at once, and spent the next few days in hiring tents and camping outfit, laying in stores, buying enamel plates and cups, and severely weeding from my wardrobe all but the most necessary clothes. When this was done I heard with pleasure, at six o'clock on the morning of June 8, the crew shouting, and the house-boat

Face p. 5

HOUSE-BOAT AND COOK-BOAT

begin to creak, then the sound of rushing water under the keel, and I knew we were free from our moorings and were moving slowly up the river in the direction of Islamabad, from which place I was to depart with my tents into the mountains.

Those who travel in boats in Kashmir have nothing to complain of on the score of comfort. The boat on which I had spent the last two months was of a kind very popular in these parts, and is known as a "House-doonga." The hull was long, narrow, and flat-bottomed, ending at both bow and stern in a long point which projected out of the water, and on which the men walked up and down when punting. The middle of the boat was covered by the house (built of light wood, and the roof covered with rush matting for coolness), which contained one sitting-room, two bed-rooms, and a bath-room, besides a sort of verandah in the front which served as an extra room, and with its open sides afforded a good view of the scenery when the boat was moving.

The crew for this consisted of four men who towed, punted, or paddled her along, with tolerable ease. A larger boat would have allowed room for more luxury, but would

have been less easy to move against the current. Behind the house-boat, following in her track like a shadow and yet trying to keep out of sight, as if half ashamed of its own shabbiness, followed the cook-boat, on which our meals were cooked, our three servants lived, as well as the crew, their wives, and numerous progeny. The cook-boat had a hull similar to ours, only smaller, and the roof and sides were made of matting, supported by light poles; the side mats could be rolled up or let down according as protection from the sun or wind demanded, and so long as the weather was fine nothing could be nicer, but on wet days or in a storm, they blew about sadly and were practically no use. The majority of Kashmir boats (*doongas* they are called), are built on this latter pattern; whether large or small, their number is endless on all parts of the river, and the boatmen form an important percentage of the population.

The Jhelum river, on which Srinagar stands and which flows down the main valley of Kashmir, allows itself, immediately above the capital, a number of twists and curves far beyond that which would content an ordinary self-respecting stream; a distance which is two miles by

VIEW OF THE TAKHT-I-SULEIMAN

Face p. 7

road is ten by the river, so that after working up against the current for several hours the traveller is rather disconcerted to find himself apparently much in the same place from whence he started; therefore, though the men worked well on this first day, there was little to note in the way of change of scenery. That I might have my tea in peace the boats were moored at a pretty spot where four immense *chenars* (plane-trees) spread their shade, over a square grassy space, in the centre of which stood a little Hindoo temple. The place was so lovely in the evening light that I jotted down some of the chief features of it for future memory. The river here makes a wide curve; straight facing us on the other shore rose the Takht-i-Suleiman, a hill 1000 feet high, on whose summit the ancient stone temple stood out in striking outline against the sky; one side of the hill lay already in shade from the slanting evening sun; higher behind it rose the blue chain of mountains which encircle the Dhal Lake, and the fort-crowned hill of Hari Parabat showed a little to the left. The river ran broad and full, there were no house-boats in sight, but now and then a doonga floated lazily down stream, towards Srinagar. Close to our boats two little kingfishers were busily diving

for their evening meal from off a willow-tree ; above in the chenars several noisy families of crows were selecting suitable sites for the night. Sheep, cows, and ponies wandered about, getting but a scanty feed from the short and intensely green spring grass. The cheerful sound of voices came from a neighbouring village where boys and men were merry over a game of tip-cat. Behind us stretched the wide, rich valley, half trees half cultivation ; a recent flood had spread a sheet of water over some wide meadows, out of which jutted a long line of willows, marking the course the foot-path usually took. The valley to the south was bounded by the grand Pir Panjal range, jagged and snow-capped and basking in the evening sun. Here and there a feathery bunch of white cloud nestled flat round a peak, or rose column-wise into the air, like smoke from a volcano. The intense blue-white of the snow seemed almost to melt into the sky above; it was only as the sun dipped nearer and nearer to the horizon that the mountains took on a faintly rosy hue, and after a time that also passed, vanishing slowly from peak to peak, the shadows ever creeping higher and higher, till at last all was grey and cold and colourless in the gathering twilight.

The first night we moored at Karkapoor, an uninteresting collection of mud huts, but I wished from thence to visit the little temple of Payech some six miles away, and so ordered a pony from the village to be in readiness next day.

CHAPTER II

VISIT TO PAYECH

It was on the stroke of six next morning when, taking with me the English saddle I had hired in Srinagar, I rowed over to the other side of the river where, in a ploughed field, a pony and man were waiting. As some years had passed since I had been on a horse, and at the best had never been a good rider, it was with distinct nervousness that I looked forward to this first experience on an untrained country pony. However one glance at the poor little rat awaiting me dispelled all fears for myself, though it made me full of compassion for the little animal I was to mount. He was white, very ugly and bony, his grey glassy eyes had a watery pink setting; his nose was mottled grey and white, and gave none of that irresistible desire to pat it which a soft, velvety, horse's nose usually inspires. He pulled and jibbed violently when being saddled, and here a few

difficulties presented themselves. Firstly, neither the two men nor myself knew any thing about saddling a horse; and, secondly, the girths had been designed for a good sized English animal and went nearly twice round this creature, who was not much bigger than a donkey. It was the resourcefulness of the boatman which overcame this difficulty by hitching a knot into the straps, which reduced their length considerably, but other puzzles remained to confront us. The saddle had been sent short of one girth, and also one of the straps to keep the flap in position was missing; this we cheerfully decided was of minor importance, so left its fellow to hang down gracefully alone; a third odd strap confused us very much and we pushed it through one of the many buckles which studded the saddle, apparently without any definite purpose; it kept in position and, as far as I was able to judge, did no harm, but I cannot say I have ever seen an English horse girthed in a similar way. However, the whole thing seemed firm, which was the main point, and when I got into my seat a few minutes afterwards the pony showed not the slightest objection, so we started at once, the owner of the pony carrying my tiffin basket wrapped round in a blanket and slung over his

shoulder, and the boatman following as guide and protector.

The path at first lay through iris-grown meadows, a very common feature of the Kashmir valley, where the plants take so firm hold upon the soil that it is next to impossible to weed them out for other crops. This is not the large, broad-leafed iris such as we have in our gardens, and which grows here also in patches on the hill-sides, chiefly over the cemeteries, but a smaller, more delicate sort, whose leaves resemble those of the jonquil. They are not a valueless crop by any means, for the sheep and cattle feed on them largely. My pony picked his way carefully along the uneven path, and a more sure-footed little animal could nowhere have been found; we came to an excellent understanding together, on the basis that I was to leave the selection of the path entirely to him. This left me freer to hold up my sunshade against the sun and saved me from pulling his mouth with the heavy bit. He had an unerring eye for the best place to plant his foot among the loose rough stones, never once stumbling, while bridges which would have sent an English horse wild with fear did not trouble him an instant. At sight of the first bridge we had

to cross I confess that my heart came into my mouth, for physical courage and love of danger never found a place in my composition. The bridge consisted of four or five pine-trees stretched over the torrent from bank to bank; across these some rough unhewn logs had been thrown, and, though some sods of earth had been placed over the lot to fill up the vacancies, yet the gaps were sufficiently yawning to enable one to see clearly the rushing water beneath. The whole structure was not more than four feet wide, with no balustrade of any sort, so that the least start or false step on the part of the pony would have sent us down twenty feet into the river below, where the water was too full of rocks to break a fall comfortably; but my little animal never turned a hair, he looked easily to right and left as if the sight and sound of the rushing water afforded him pleasure, carefully picked his way among the loose logs so as to avoid putting his hoof down a hole, and behaved as if he were on the best macadamised road. I breathed freely again, and when we came to the next bridge thought I had nothing to fear, for though the river was larger and the bridge consequently longer, it was a more elaborate structure and had a rail on either side; but just at the moment I came up

to it, a cow appeared at the other end and seemed as anxious to hold it against all comers as the dauntless three in "Horatius." My coolie therefore ran forward to drive her back, and the movement set up by the two of them caused the bridge to sway backwards and forwards as if it had been hung only on loose ropes; I allowed it a few seconds to subside, but even then as I passed it creaked and swung to such an extent as to make me feel, as the Irishman expressed it, as if "each moment would be my next."

We passed through several villages, picturesque and dirty as all Kashmir villages are; the houses were of mud and timber, with ramshackle wooden verandahs and projecting balconies, blackened usually with age or smoke; there is far more picturesqueness of structure to be seen here than in an Indian village. Unfortunately the people themselves never lend the beautiful touches of colour which are such a delight to the eye in India; the Kashmiri is essentially of the earth, earthy. In a land flowing with water he appears never to wash from one year's end to the other; his shapeless and effeminate cotton garment, which might be white, is usually black with the dirt of ages; his dark homespun is an ugly brown colour, and clean or not, would never look so. As

he stands cultivating the fields, both his own complexion and that of his clothes blend with the tone of the new ploughed earth. It is, of course, not fair to judge other people by our own standards, and in a land where it is considered the sign of a loose character for a woman to be clean, it is not likely that cleanliness will be reckoned next to godliness.

Once passed the villages with their mulberry- and walnut-trees growing on the village green, and the pretty streams over-hung with willows, (there was surely never such a country for willows,) a long stretch across open rice-fields lay before us. Rice has to be grown in running water; to this end the whole valley had been graduated in terraces enclosed by little banks of grass, and rivulets of water came down from the highlands above and trickled from terrace to terrace down the whole valley, making it shine like a lake in the morning sun, for the crops were only just beginning to sprout, and showed up like thin blades of grass through the water. Overhead the larks were singing with that whole-hearted happiness which seems to characterise the lark all the world over; there was a thin morning haze over the landscape, through which the line of snow-capped mountains,

which fringed the horizon, looked more than usually ethereal. The track was now very narrow, not more than a thin raised mud bank winding through the rice-fields, and was made very slippery by the water, but that excellent pony kept his foothold like a cat, and never slipped or wavered for a moment. We gradually neared a curious low sand-hill, flat as a billiard table on the top, the face of which was honeycombed with small holes in which birds of all sorts were building. A shallow river ran at the foot of this hill, winding as small streams will, for which reason our little foot-track suddenly made a great effort to keep straight, and boldly cut through the water as often as it got in the way, therefore we had to wade three times before we were finished with it. Where the river came in close to the foot of the hill the path struck upwards, and rather nervous work I found it as we rose higher and higher, for the path at best was not more than a yard wide, and being of loose, sandy soil it often crumbled half away. It was here that I realised that it was best to let my apparently meek pony have everything entirely his own way, for at one part where the path had almost disappeared down the cliff, a fresh track had been worn a few yards higher up the face of the hill.

I naturally preferred the latter as farthest removed from the yawning depth on my right, but the pony thought otherwise and wished for the older and more level path. With whip and rein I gained my point, only to regret it sincerely the next minute; for, arrived at the top, that most sedate animal pretended to be smitten with a fit of nerves, he hesitated and balanced from one foot to another, but refused to go down the edge of the slope; I coaxed and persuaded, he in reply plainly asserted that he really *couldn't*, his courage was not equal to such a task, though of course it was nothing to places down which we had already come. Retreat was out of the question, for there was no room to turn; on my left rose a perpendicular sand cliff, on my right was a clear drop of fifty feet into the stream below; dismounting was equally impossible, therefore progression was our only salvation, and that was the one method my steed refused to consider. After what seemed to me an age, but which was probably only a few seconds by the watch, he put one foot gingerly forward and, finding the earth firm beneath, stiffly and still nervously continued down the path, until we at last reached level ground once more; but I had learned my lesson, and then and there resolved no more to impose my foreign

ignorance on his local instinct, and the rest of our ride passed in peace.

The Temple of Payech, the aim and object of my ride, is small but very well preserved; like many other Kashmir temples it is of uncertain date, though opinion seems to favour the end of the fifth century A.D., as the time of its erection. The accompanying snapshot will give a better idea of the general outline than a tedious verbal description, though the finer details of carving round the lintels are necessarily lost in so small a photograph. Perhaps the pretty surroundings of this temple help as much as anything to make it a favourite with travellers; the sloping green knoll on which it stands, the cool shade of a clump of walnut-trees close by, the glimpses of a village seen through the trees behind, and the cheerful brook running at the foot of the slope, form a charming setting to a building which would be dwarfed by scenery of a grander scale.

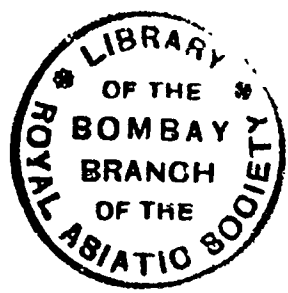
After viewing it from every position, and making a brief note of the details to serve for comparison with other temples yet to be seen, I settled down comfortably to tiffin under a thick-foliaged walnut-tree, the sad pony snatched a scanty meal of grass, and half the village turned out to squat

RIVER ABOVE SRINAGAR

THE TEMPLE OF PAYECH

Face p. 18

down on the ground with my two men, and gossip in the never-ending way habitual to Kashmiris. So we enjoyed an hour's rest, and only fear of the ever increasing heat prevented us from making the rest longer ; as it was, long before the return journey was accomplished the sun was striking down with increasing intensity, and I was glad to reach the shelter of the boat again and enjoy a well-earned bath and rest after the dusty ride ; then the boatmen cast loose and we continued the journey up stream.


LIBRARY
OF THE
BOMBAY
BRANCH
OF THE
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER III

ACHIBAL

Two days more up the river brought me to Islamabad, the Ultima Thule for travellers on the Jhelum, for beyond that it is too shallow for house-boats to go. It was a grand evening of packing, that last one on the boat; both I, the boatmen, and servants wrestled till eleven o'clock at night with refractory household goods; such things as knives, forks, lamps, groceries, books, bottles of oil, vinegar and ink, lamp oil and house linen, do not take kindly at first to travelling in close company, but we triumphed with patience, and in the end the damask table-cloth and the pot of blacking, the glass lamp-chimney and the hard enamel soup plate, lay down in the *kilta* side by side, and like the young lion and the calf in Isaiah, were no worse for the contact.

A kilta I should explain, for those who have not

KASHMIRI BOATMAN

Face p. 121

travelled in Kashmir, is an invaluable article for camping, and may be best described as a cross between an Ali Baba jar and a clothes basket; that is to say, it has the pleasantly bulging shape of the Ali Baba jars of one's childhood's pictures, but is of basket work, covered with leather; this, with the round lid and the modest way it has of occupying a corner of the tent, suggests the useful soiled-linen basket of a well regulated English bed-room. I had invested in Srinagar in two new kiltas, of which I was very proud, and into these most of my stores and household things were packed. When half full, the cook, who was young and excitable, burst into the sitting-room and said he must have one kilta for the meat; the Bearer and I hotly protested against this desecration of our clean new purchases, and said the meat must travel in the place obviously intended for it by Nature, *i.e.*, the meat-safe; whereupon the cook retired grumbling, saying that the sun would spoil his wares, but we shouted after him to try paper for a protection, and with that, as they say in diplomatic circles, the incident was closed, for certainly when we reached the first halting-place that night the meat seemed no worse for its sun-baked journey.

As with every previous packing of which I have had the guidance the books were the bane of the whole arrangement and the rugs the means of salvation. I have packed for many journeys and under every variety of circumstance, and never yet have I succeeded in making the articles fit into the boxes intended for them; then, in the midst of blank despair, comes the rest-bringing thought that the rugs have yet to be rolled up, and what will it matter if the straps have to be let out a few more holes? No one will notice it. The result is, I generally set out on my travels with an elegant Gladstone bag, a still more lady-like hat-box, and a bundle of rugs which looks as if it had just arrived from a wholesale carpet warehouse.

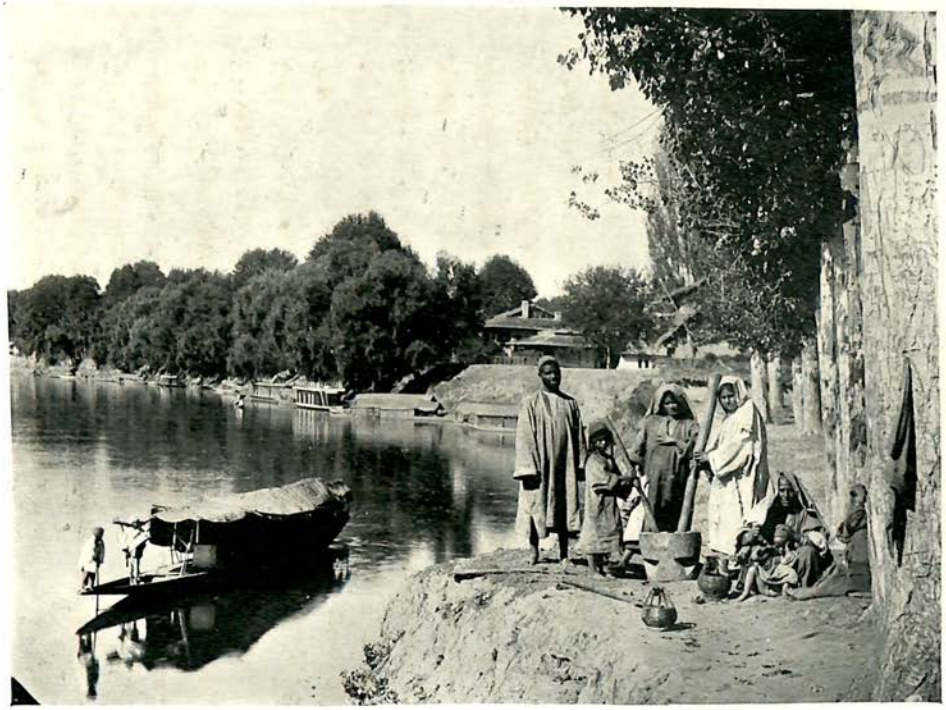
I had intended placing the books in the kiltas, but when these latter were filled nearly to the brim with stores, my better feelings revolted against seeing my new Morley's "Cromwell," Lord Roberts' "Forty-One Years," the "Forest Lovers," and a Browning, not to mention other valued friends, packed cheek by jowl with the scourings of a grocer's shop, (also, to speak quite truthfully, the Bearer told me he needed the remaining space for his lamps,) so the usual gloom was settling upon me, while the servants

stood round in a circle, asking with endless insistence *where* I meant to pack the things, when like an inspiration the never failing solution flashed upon me, and dragging the hold-all into the middle of the room I shook out a warm dressing-gown and fur-cloak, then before they knew what was happening to them, poet, statesman, and field-marshal were nestling snugly in the warm folds, where they remained free from damp and harm during the next three days' travelling.

The first day's march is always full of interest even to an old traveller; it is important to know how many coolies will be wanted, and what sort of loads the ponies will carry, for then the total expense of the journey can be roughly calculated. Now this was my very first experience of marching, and, moreover, I was personally conducting myself, with no outside aid from any one, so I will be forgiven when I say that I rose next morning in a state of unusual excitement. When I stepped on shore a curious sight presented itself, for amidst a crowd of coolies, ponies, and boatmen, I perceived lying strewn over the ground every stick of furniture I possessed, apparently in wild disorder; and yet not in utter disorder, for there was a

certain method in the madness. On looking closer I noticed that where one kilta lay, there lay the other one also, bound to it by strands of cord and sharing a small piece of square sacking; my bedding and a bundle of tent canvas were similarly mated together on another little black bed, while farther on three camp-chairs and a dining-table went, so to speak, hand in hand. There was reason in all this, for it is essential both for the safety of the luggage and the comfort of the pack-pony that the load should be evenly balanced; the coolies had seen to all this, and there was now nothing to do but to lift each burden on to the ponies' backs where their own weight kept them in position. There are of course some things which always refuse to find their counterpoise, and for which special arrangements have to be made; my zinc bath was one of these and usually graced the top of a pony's back after the side-loads had been arranged. Similarly the meat-safe had to travel alone, strapped to the shoulders of a coolie, who also carried in his hand a tin of kerosene oil, which had been voted too dangerous a neighbour for close association with other things.

It was a curious sight as the ponies tailed off up the road



KASHMIRI BOAT FOLK

Face p. 23

to see one's usually inanimate furniture galvanised into life and action by the journey; my wicker chair which I had hitherto regarded as prosaic, now reclined with a jaunty tilt on the back of one animal and seemed as it passed to rakishly dare me to take my customary seat between its comfortable arms; next came the tea-table (usually so peacefully suggestive of afternoon tea) with legs kicking angrily in the air in protest at the indignity of being made to perform the whole journey on its head; the following pony went by to the sound of a mighty cackling, for three poor chickens, tied by the legs, were made fast to the top of the load and much resented being compulsory travellers. I was always sorry when we had to travel with live stock, for animals fare badly at the hands of native servants, and it seemed hard after sharing in all the fatigues of the day that they should only find rest in the stock-pot. I wished it could have been so ordered that death preceded the funeral march, as with human beings; but under a tropical sun this was not always feasible, so the march came first and death followed.

It was with no regret that I bade the boatmen and their families adieu; though a fine race physically, they are for

the most part a grasping, thievish, cowardly set, and these in particular had done their best to cheat me at every transaction. No quotation had so often run in my head since coming into the country as the opening lines of Browning's "Childe Roland"—"My first thought was, he lied in every word." And this I may add is usually the first, second, and ultimate impression left on the mind of the European in his dealings with Kashmiris. They were true to their parts to the last moment, and when I distributed gratuities broadcast, on a scale which I afterwards found was far too liberal, they were received with a surprised lifting of the eyebrows and scarcely veiled smile of contempt, which was intended to convey the impression that such a small gift was hardly worth the recipient's acceptance. This line of conduct always in the end defeats its own object, for the traveller, finding his best endeavours systematically flouted, thinks he may as well save his own purse and give the grasping native some real cause for discontent. It is not by such methods that the insinuating Italian beguiles so many coins from the pocket of his victim.

For my own personal use on this journey I had engaged the services of a fat little circus pony, by which I mean that

the animal was of an aggressive, almost artificial piebald ; he was well fed and amiable, and beyond a gregarious desire to stop and speak to every other animal we passed and turn off towards every village, he showed no bad qualities that first day. Our road lay over the bridge across the Jhelum and up through the unimportant town of Islamabad. The place was just waking into life, and we passed numerous cap-makers busily engaged in embroidery work as they squatted in the open verandahs of their shops ; there were various bakeries everywhere around, and 'not altogether unwholesome-looking loaves were exposed to view ; also a few iron-mongers and vendors of cheap jewellery ; beyond these there was little to notice. The streets were steep and narrow, and had been paved some generations ago with a peculiarly vicious and angular species of cobble-stone, the hardy survivors of which still heroically strove with some success to keep down the traffic. It was an Eastern town of an uninteresting type, yet as I rode through it the thought came how much more at home an Englishman of the Middle Ages would have felt in this crooked oriental town than in the spacious thoroughfares of a modern western city. The narrow street devoid of side-pavement, the gutter running

down the middle, the doors of the houses so low that a man must stoop to pass through, the projecting balconies, the bye-lanes where two men could hardly pass abreast, the refuse thrown from each house into the street below, the absolute disregard for all sanitation, the goods exposed to the open air, the gossiping outdoor life, where jokes were bandied from shop to shop across the street, lastly the absence of wheeled traffic, all this more nearly resembled Europe of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries than the boulevards of a modern town.

The servants and luggage went direct to Bawan, a march of some six miles, but I made a longer round by Achibal and Martand, both places worth a visit. The path, which was unusually good for Kashmir, lay through endless rice-fields; but a row of willows shaded a good part of the way, so that I was not compelled to keep up my white umbrella, a troublesome but necessary adjunct to riding in India. As we passed along I saw a process which is called "washing" the rice. About twenty or thirty coolies, naked save for a loin-cloth, would stand close together in a field of sprouting rice, over which water was flowing; with their bare legs they would trample freely (an onlooker would say almost

ISLAMABAD

Facť p. 28

recklessly), among the tender green plants, often stooping and making use of their hands to dash the water about. Where coolies could not be obtained, a herd of cattle or ponies would be driven backwards and forwards over the same field, much to the astonishment of the scared animals who must have thought their masters had for the time taken leave of their senses, for no sooner were they well started in one direction than they were headed off into another and made to go back on their steps, all to the accompaniment of much yelling and screaming. The rice after this process looked considerably thinned and crushed, as may be imagined, and I failed, from want of knowledge of the language, to ascertain what good was really done by it; but the results are certainly excellent, for Kashmir is one of the most fertile rice-producing provinces of India.

After two hours slow riding I came to Achibal, a lovely spot, where many streams flow down from the hills, and wide-spreading walnut-trees seem to invite the wayfarer to get off his pony and rest on the green grass under their shade. I did as I saw many natives were doing, unsaddled my pony and turned him loose to graze, then went with the coolie, who had been following all the time with my tiffin basket,

into the picturesque garden which the artistic instincts of a Moghul emperor had left behind for the delight of future generations.

Those old emperors (Jahangir in especial) had an infallible eye for the most lovely spots in Nature, and now, after a lapse of three hundred years, English visitors to the Dhal Lake, to Manesbal, to Achibal and Vernag, still find gardens laid out, fountains playing, shady pavilions to rest in, and fruit-trees growing, much as those past despots designed them, and everywhere the beauties seem enhanced by their intelligent interference with Nature, not marred, as would be so often the case, under the hands of a modern landscape gardener.

Achibal is peculiarly well adapted to the terraced form of garden with running channels of water, which the Moghuls especially loved. At the foot of a steep pine-covered hill an immense volume of fresh water comes welling out from the ground; this is guided along two or three channels, falls splashing down several terraces, breaks away into smaller side channels, unites again into one big volume, rushes under an arched pavilion, and finally in one broad stream passes through a gateway and flows away in a

natural bed to join the small river at the bottom of the valley.

A few flowers and a good many vegetables are grown by the native keeper of this garden, a charming old character in himself and well worth attention ; but for the most part nature has taken the matter in hand and spread a thick green carpet under the giant chenar- and walnut-trees which stand thickly around. On the hill above, the dark blue of the pines, over which the kites were idly soaring, formed a refreshing contrast against the bright sky, while under the trees golden aureoles and other birds, some white with long graceful tails, some brilliant copper, and others jet black, all at this time busily intent on nest-building and the rearing of families, gave a continual touch of interest close at hand.

There was a party of natives in one of the centre pavilions, so I retired to a more secluded corner of the garden, settled myself on the ground against a chenar tree of immense girth, and then—read Browning or Lalla Rookh and thought of the past ?—not a bit of it ! but I spread out my umbrella for privacy, used the saddle (which we had brought in with us for safety) as a pillow and went off fast asleep. I would plead in extenuation that I had been up at

five o'clock and had a long ride in the sun ; whether that will excuse me in the eyes of those romantically inclined I cannot say ; certain it is that no sooner did I find myself in the cool shade of that green garden than a great longing came over me to lie down and sleep by the sound of the murmuring water, and never in my life did I enjoy a more delicious two-hours rest.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORY OF KASHMIR

It may be of interest to some readers to hear about the past history of Kashmir, and more especially the occupation of it by the Moghul emperors. No one could have been more profoundly ignorant on the subject than myself when I entered the country, but having since dipped into a good many books and gathered some information on the matter, I set it down here as perhaps not wholly uninteresting to those who have no more knowledge than I had. There are many, however, who are well up in Indian history, and others who do not care for a sandwich of solid reading in an otherwise frivolous text; to such I would say unreservedly, "Pass over the following chapter."

The early history of Kashmir—like the birth of Mr. James Yellowplush and many other important events—is "wrapped up in mystery." Local tradition has it that the

whole valley was once a vast lake, wherein dwelt a wicked demon who laid waste the shores ; until one day a kindly sage came by, who, feeling grieved at the sight of so much wanton havoc, piously did penance for a thousand years, and at the end of that time, feeling sufficiently fortified for the task, he with some difficulty overcame the demon, over whom a mountain was dropped for future safety ; the waters of the lake were then drained off through a cleft of the rocks at Baramulla, as they run to this day.

Such is the picturesque tradition of the country, and modern criticism, that stern mistress who ruthlessly deprives us of our most cherished beliefs, giving us but the dry skeleton of facts in their place, admits on geological grounds the theory of the lake, but will have naught to say to the sage and the demon.

Setting fable on one side, it can be stated briefly that Kashmir was peopled by the Ayrians, though whether on their first inroad from Central Asia, or after they had overspread India, has not yet been definitely proved. Her isolated position and high mountain ramparts saved the country subsequently from the many invasions to which the plains of northern India were so frequently subject, and this

fact accounts for a greater continuity in her history than is met with in that of other Indian territories.

For many hundred years before our era, and down to the fourteenth century, Kashmir was ruled by Hindu sovereigns; these were generally of her own land and little known to the outside world, but sometimes a name stands out which is famous also in other countries, such as that of the great King Asoka (250 B.C.), the convert to Buddhism, who ruled over a wide stretch of land besides Kashmir, and whose interesting stone inscriptions have been found all over India. At times the name of some almost forgotten king will give proof of unmistakable Turkish or Tartar origin, showing there had been an invasion from without; but for the most part during those long centuries the country was left in seclusion to work out her own history, neither much over-run by conquerors nor conquering far beyond the neighbouring hills, despite the boasts of later historians.

Both Brahmanism and its offshoot Buddhism flourished in the land, and it was during the first ten centuries of our era that those fine Hindu temples, whose ruins still claim the admiration of travellers, were erected in the valley. Kashmir has at all time been famed as a place of holy shrines,

and this fame had for a long period the result of attracting many pious Chinese pilgrims to worship at the Buddhist shrines. Some of these celestial pilgrims left careful itineraries of their wanderings, and these itineraries, dating some of them as far back as the seventh century, are now gradually coming to light, and have done much in helping to dispel some of the obscurity which hangs over this period of Kashmirian history.

With the arrival of the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., the native chronicles of the country grow more ample in detail, and they may be relied on pretty well for historical accuracy; we hear no longer exclusively of the doings of kings (often imaginary), but come at last in touch with the lives of the people. We read of a great engineer, Suyya, who under King Avantivarman (855–883 A.D.) drained the valley and reclaimed much land wasted by flood, thereby cheapening the price of rice, the important staple of food. It is interesting to reflect that Suyya's memory is commemorated to this day by the town of Sopor (anciently *Suyyapura*), which was founded by him. We hear that even in those early days the villagers were sacrificed to the town-dwellers, who were allowed to wax rich and enjoy many

privileges denied to the rural population ; whence probably arose a common Kashmiri proverb, "A village tiger and a city dog are equal."

Of greater interest still, we read so far back as the ninth century of the hardship pressing on the rural population by the system of forced labour for transport, that dreaded "Begar," which caused so much misery in succeeding centuries, right down to our own times. In a mountainous country, devoid of roads, the one great method of transport must necessarily be the human back, and under a despotic government if men will not come willingly to carry they are brought by force. This system would obviously place unlimited power of extortion in the hands of the officials, who were quick to take bribes to exempt men from serving, though often in the end allowing the same men to be carried away by the press-gang when others were able to come to them with a higher bribe. Down to recent times, when men were wanted for transport to Gilgit or distant parts, villagers would stampede to the hills to avoid the terrors of the press, and when those who went were lucky enough to escape death from cholera, cold, and privation on the road, they would return after three or four months to find their

crops ruined and their fields gone to waste in their absence; and in return for all this misery, when working for government, they received no wage. Any reader of W. R. Lawrence's admirable book, "The Valley of Kashmir," will read with indignation—and very just indignation—of the hardships inflicted by this Eastern *corvée*, more harsh in its operation than any put in force by the worst French monarchy; he will hug himself with the thought that he is the citizen of a free country, holding sentiments of freedom; until perhaps some day the same reader finds himself in a remote Kashmir valley with all his baggage on the ground around him, and a village full of idle Kashmiris sitting smoking near by and refusing to go a day's march with him, bribe he never so wisely; and then perhaps his sentiments will undergo a sudden revulsion, he will wonder if a little pressure on the coolie is so *very* wrong after all, and he will end by realising with a shock that there is nothing more easy in an Eastern country than to fall into the ways and thoughts of a despot.

But whatever hardships certain of the rulers may have inflicted, there can hardly be a doubt that Kashmirians under their own early Hindu kings enjoyed a greater

amount of freedom and prosperity than has since fallen to their lot. Evidence of this is given by the numerous ruins of towns and villages, of irrigation canals, of splendid temples, and the great quantities of coins which are every where discovered over the valley and belonging to that period. As Hindus, living under Hindu monarchs, they must at least have been free from the evils of persecution; learning was respected, and the fame of the Kashmir Pundits spread far beyond the limits of the valley. Under no succeeding rulers has the number of the population or the acreage of land under cultivation stood so high. The chronicler, Kalhana, writing in the twelfth century, used only a little oriental exaggeration when he joyfully summed up the pleasures of his country as follows: "Learning, lofty houses, icy water and grapes; things that even in heaven are difficult to find, are common here."

In the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries Kashmir went through an epoch of turmoil strangely similar in character to that experienced by several European countries at the same date. While every class of the community in France, Italy, Hungary, and the Rhine, was learning by bitter daily experience that a host of petty tyrants was more

disastrous than one strong central despot, and that it was better to be under the hand of a powerful king than ground under the heel of a powerful nobility, Kashmir too went through her time of trouble at the hands of a turbulent landed aristocracy. These *Damaras*, as they were called, left no peace in the land; they would sweep out from their strongholds, make and unmake kings, throw all classes into confusion, and lay waste the fields. They had no wish for a firm central authority as their chief desire was plunder; if the king was sometimes too powerful they escaped from his wrath to the hills and bided their time. The chronicler, Kalhana, describing them from the bitterness of his personal experience, says, "they are well skilled only in burning, plundering, and fighting."

It says much for the inaccessibility of Kashmir that though this state of affairs lasted over three centuries, no determined effort to conquer the land was made by the Muhammadan invaders who were meanwhile spreading over the plains of India. Mahmud of Ghazni had, it is true, attempted an invasion (*circa* 1020) over the Pir Panjal pass, but meeting with opposition, both from man and the elements, had desisted; of the other great invaders, Chingiz

Khan (1221), only reached the Indus, while Timur (1398), and Baber (1526), made for the fertile plains round Delhi, leaving Kashmir on one side.

In the fourteenth century the old and discredited Hindu monarchy was displaced by a series of Muhammadan rulers, a change which brought no rest or improvement to the land. Sometimes these Musalman Sultans were tolerant of their subjects' Hindu tendencies, at other times they were iconoclastic, and the fine old temples of Kashmir suffered in consequence, being pulled down to make mosques for the followers of Muhammad.

There is one among these Muhammadan rulers whose name stands out as deserving honourable mention, that of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, who succeeded to the Kashmir throne in 1417 A.D., and ruled wisely and humanely for fifty-two years. He carried out many useful irrigation and engineering works, was a friend to the cultivators, introduced fresh manufactures, and was the patron of poets and musicians. His toleration towards the Hindus brought back many who had fled into exile, and he even went so far as to repair some of their temples; his name is to this day kept in loving remembrance by the people. His successors

unfortunately inherited none of his great qualities, and the country was given over as a playground to the Chaks, a turbulent race who came from the north, and who though frequently chastised always appeared once more in the field.

From them the country enjoyed no peace until the advent of the Moghuls under the Emperor Akbar; this great man, the greatest ruler perhaps that India has seen, sent an army, 1586 A.D., to conquer Kashmir, as part and parcel of his policy for the consolidation of his empire in northern India. Thenceforward a change came over the land; it was brought into touch with the outer world; Kashmirian interests were bound up with a great empire; viceroys were sent from Delhi to govern the valley, which now became the favourite summer residence of the Emperors.

The Moghul Emperors have left so many testimonies of their stay, with their lovely pleasure-gardens, summer-houses and plantations of chenars, that one is perhaps tempted to dwell unduly on the events of their reign, and to give them credit for effecting more than they really did for the land. Akbar the Great, it is true, was too busy all

his life, regaining and enlarging the kingdom his father had lost, to have much time to spend personally on Kashmir ; he visited the valley three times, built a fort on Hari Purbat, (more with the purpose of giving employment and bringing the frightened population back to work, than to over-awe the town of Srinagar,) ordered a revenue settlement, and then made over the country to a viceroy. It was his son and successor Jahangir who first discovered the delights of the valley for a summer residence. In his "Memoirs," he writes : "Kashmir is a delightful country in the seasons of autumn and spring. . . . I visited it and found it even more charming than I had anticipated. . . . The surface of the land is so covered with green that it requires no carpet to be spread upon it"—a remark which will be better appreciated by those who have spent their lives in the sandy plains of India than by those who dwell among the green fields of England. It was to Kashmir that the Emperor escaped with his beloved Empress Nur-Mahal, as often as the rebellion of his son and his subjects permitted, to forget all cares of State in the pleasure of laying out fresh gardens and erecting summer-houses on the slopes of the wondrous mountains.

A Lonely Summer in Kashmir

The Empress who transformed the stern fort of Agra into a palace of delight, causing marble screens to be wrought like lace and the walls to be studded with precious jewels, showed her taste by introducing none of these luxuries into the northern valley, but was content to avail herself of Nature's gifts, making terraces, guiding water-falls, and planting trees. The tale of Nur-Mahal (*i.e.*, "The Light of the Palace;" also called "Nurjahan," the Light of the World) has often been told; but it will bear repetition, for even the fables of the Arabian Nights do not outvie the simple outlines of her story, and it is a pity that many writers have been at the pains to invent false facts about her, when the plain truth would have supplied them with so much better material.

Nur-Mahal came of a good Persian family which had settled at Khorosan, but having fallen upon evil days her parents determined to emigrate and try their fortune afresh in Hindustan. On the way they were robbed of their few remaining possessions, and when at Kandahar the little girl, afterwards known as Nur-Mahal, was born, her parents were so destitute that they were driven to expose the new-born infant on the highway, hoping no doubt it would attract the

charitable notice of some passer-by. This was what actually came to pass, for as charity and kindness to children are common traits in the East, it is not surprising that a certain rich merchant who was one of the caravan to which they had attached themselves, seeing and pitying the child, determined to adopt her for his own. The first thing was to find a nurse in the caravan to attend to the child, and naturally no woman was found more eager for the task than the child's own mother. So the whole story came to the merchant's ears, who thereupon interested himself in the parent's behalf; there seems to have been no more thought of his adopting Nur-Mahal, but he gave employment to the father and son, and was able shortly to bring them to the notice of the Emperor Akbar. Thus the family fortune was speedily made, for Akbar was prompt to reward merit and probity, both of which Nur-Mahal's father seems to have possessed in an unusual degree. While her parents prospered (indirectly through her instrumentation) the little Nur-Mahal grew daily in beauty and often went with her mother to visit the ladies of the Emperor's harem; there she was seen by the Crown Prince Selim (afterwards the Emperor Jahangir), who straightway conceived a passionate

attachment for her, which remained to him through life. As Nur-Mahal was already betrothed to a noble young Persian, Shir-Afghan-Khan, to remove her from the Prince's notice she was, at Akbar's suggestion, wedded without delay, and ShirA-fghan was assigned a distant government in Bengal. But the Crown Prince craftily bided his time, and when in a few years he became Emperor he sent an envoy to Shir-Afghan with the suggestion that he should yield his wife to Jahangir. Shir-Afghan was a man of proud family and little disposed to brook such an insult, though he must have foreseen only too surely what the end would be ; the exact details of what happened are not known to us, but it resulted in the indignant husband stabbing the ambassador who brought him the proposals and being himself at once cut down by the Emperor's men. All writers unite in describing Shir-Afghan as a man of noble nature ; alone his rival, the Emperor, had not the generosity to forgive his rivalry, and in referring to his death in the " Memoirs," expresses the uncharitable hope that " the black-faced wretch will forever remain in hell."

On the death of her husband Nur-Mahal was straightway sent to the Emperor's harem at Delhi, and then what

passed between those two we know not, and once more the curtain descends when we would willingly see more of this human drama. Some writers say that Jahangir left the woman, for whom he had so schemed, in neglect for the next few years; others, more kindly to Nur-Mahal, say that she indignantly repelled the advances of her husband's murderer and would have naught to say to him. This much we know, that for about four years she lived in his palace in obscurity and neglect, then suddenly all difference was over between them, the Emperor's love for her blazed afresh, they were married in the year 1611 with the greatest pomp; at one step she took the position of favourite wife, a position from which no younger rival ever came to displace her. Honours were showered upon her and her family, her father became Prime Minister, her brother rose high in the State; Jahangir virtually abdicated all power to her, and coins were struck in their joint names. He himself in his autobiography says: "The whole concern of my household, whether gold or jewels, is under her sole and entire management. Of my unreserved confidence indeed, this princess is in entire possession, and I may allege without a fallacy that the whole fortune of my empire has been consigned to

the disposal of this highly endowed family, the father being my diwan, the son my lieutenant-general, with unlimited powers, and the daughter the inseparable companion of all my cares."

Her influence over her husband was at first undoubtedly good; he rarely yielded after their marriage to his former barbarous bursts of cruelty, and though he always remained a hard drinker, he now was content to confine his drinking to his private apartments. Had Nur-Mahal been satisfied with the influence she exercised in her husband's reign and not desired to govern the succession of his children, they might have spent their lives in comparative peace, but she was anxious to secure an influence in the government in the event of his death, and so having first favoured Prince Shah Jahan, who had married her niece, she transferred her liking to his younger brother, the good-looking but less strong-willed Shahriyar, who had married her own daughter by Shir-Afghan. Civil war was the consequence, and as Jahangir had rebelled against his father Akbar, so now his son rebelled against him; one revolt led to another and there was no settled peace between them. It can be readily understood how gladly the imperial couple escaped from

the heat and troubles of the Court at Delhi to forget themselves in Kashmir, their land of delight. The charm of the green verdure after the scorching heat of the plains, the luxury of drifting lazily among the lotus-flowers on the Dhal lake, the keen interest of selecting the most favoured spot on the banks for their summer gardens, the interest of planning terraces, planting groves, and designing fountains which were to throw up a thousand jets, and then to return year after year to see their work grow and their trees prosper. The Shalimar Bag, the Nishat Bag, Achibal, and many other places, testify to the delight of Jahangir and his Queen in Kashmir. It was to Kashmir the Emperor came in sickness in the last year of his life; it was on the way out of Kashmir that he died; and when, dying, they asked him if he wanted anything, his reply was "Only Kashmir."

Jahangir died in 1627, and lies buried in a princely tomb at Lahore. His wife survived him more than eighteen years, but took no further part in public affairs; she was granted a handsome income, and was content to devote the remainder of her life to his memory. She lies buried in a tomb she herself had erected close to that of her husband at Lahore.

Shah Jahan, their successor, had also a magnificent taste for building. He was often in Kashmir, and added to the number of pleasure-grounds there, and, what was of more importance to the inhabitants, he was fortunate in the character of the men whom he appointed as his lieutenants.

Under both Jahangir and Shah Jahan Kashmir prospered and enjoyed a settled government; the emperors and their wealthy nobles brought money into the land, while the permanent viceroys encouraged industry and remitted many of the more oppressive taxes. It was during these reigns that those massive *serais* or rest-houses were built along the chief roads to the valley, several of which can be seen on the Pir Pinjal route to this day; at that time the entrance by the Jhelum valley (now so popular) was little used.

But under Aurangzeb (1658–1707), the austere successor of the more easy-going Shah Jahan, the Brahmins of Kashmir, like the rest of the Emperor's Hindu subjects, had to undergo a period of sharp persecution; their temples were cast down, and the hated poll-tax (abolished by the clemency of Akbar) was once more imposed on all who were not followers of Muhammad. Aurangzeb was cast in a stern Puritan mould; he would have felt kindred in spirit to

the Englishmen of the Commonwealth; he hated all profusion and luxury, and went about plainly clothed; by a royal proclamation he silenced all players and minstrels. Hoping to mitigate the decree, the poor singers came in procession under his window carrying a bier, with wailing and lamentations, till the Emperor looked out and asked what it meant. "Music," they replied, "was dead and they were bearing forth her corpse." "Pray bury her deeply," was the dry rejoinder, "that henceforth she may make no more noise."

In his long reign of fifty years Aurangzeb paid but one visit to Kashmir, but that visit is remembered for the fierce zeal he showed in persecuting the Hindus. With his death in 1707 the glory of the Moghuls departed; feebleness and incapacity were the characteristics of his successors; civil wars were frequent, while out-lying States fell, as a natural consequence, into revolt and independence. Kashmir suffered under this disorder, there was no strong hand to keep her viceroys in check, the office became practically hereditary, and rival factions fought among each other.

This state of affairs lasted until the year 1752, when a new race of invaders came over the mountains, and the unfortunate country became subject to the worst rulers it has

been her hard lot to know. These were the Afghans under Ahmed Shah, the founder of the Durani dynasty, a strong northern ruler who had established himself on the throne of Kandahar in 1747, and had followed this stroke up by a series of brilliant expeditions against the Punjab and Delhi. In 1752 Ahmed conquered Kashmir, and then for over sixty years the fair valley was given up to the most flagrant tyranny at the hands of semi-barbarous governors, who were appointed from Kabul ; men whose only desire was to wring as much money as possible from the inhabitants during their brief reign of office—for at any moment a revolution at headquarters might recall them from their post. Against their brutality and cruelty there was no redress ; their highest form of amusement was to torture and kill the Hindus. It was said of these rulers that they thought no more of cutting off heads than of plucking a flower. Many Brahmins fled the country, others were killed or converted to Islam, but all classes suffered from the tyranny of the Afghans, and none more than the unfortunate peasants who were ground down to the most abject poverty.

George Forster, a servant of the East India Company, who travelled through Kashmir in the year 1783, has left a

vivid account of the tyranny practised in his time. After stating that in the time of Aurangzeb the revenue collected in Kashmir amounted to three and a half lakhs of rupees, he goes on to say that "at this time not less than twenty lakhs are extracted by the Afghan governor, who, if his tribute be regularly remitted to Court, is allowed to execute with impunity every act of violence. This extreme rigour has sensibly affected the deportment and manners of the Kashmirians, who shrink with dread from the Afghan oppressions, and are fearful of making any display of opulence. . . . During my stay in Kashmir I often witnessed the harsh treatment which the common people received at the hands of their masters, who rarely issued an order without a blow of the side of their hatchet, a common weapon of the Afghans, and used by them in war as a battle-axe."

With such oppressors hemming them in on the West, it was natural that the people should turn with longing eyes to the rising power that lay to southward of them, namely, to the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab.

The Sikhs during their short term of power played so important a part, both in the history of Kashmir and British India, that a few words about them may not be out of place.

They were originally only a religious sect, whose founder, Nanak, was born near Lahore in 1469, being thus a contemporary of the first Moghul Emperor, Baber. Nanak lived a holy life, and his creed was a sort of reformed Hinduism, free from idolatry. He had a limited following in his day, but after his death his disciples rapidly increased, under the tolerant rule of Akbar and Akbar's immediate successors. The movement become systematised; the "Sikhs" (*i.e.*, disciples) owned a recognised "guru," or spiritual head; sacred books were compiled; the followers paid a tax; round their tank and temple at Amritsar a town began to arise. In 1675 the ruling Guru was arbitrarily put to death by Aurangzeb, for suspected disloyalty to the Emperor, which roused the Sikhs to put themselves under a more military constitution, and their numbers and discipline now made them a force to be reckoned with. The persecution to which they were subjected under the succeeding Moghul Emperors roused their hatred of the Muhammadans to the highest pitch, fighting was continuous between them, and barbarities were practised on both sides. At one time the Sikhs were all but exterminated, but they always preferred death to renouncing their faith. When the strength of the

Moghuls dwindled, there were invading forces of Afghans, Mahrattas, English, and French to be dealt with, for the Punjab was then the battle-ground of all able-bodied adventurers, anxious to carve out a kingdom. So the Sikhs learned fighting in a stern school and were ripe for a leader when, at the opening of the nineteenth century, the star of young Ranjit Singh arose, and he proceeded by the force of his personality to weld them into a nation.

Ranjit Singh began his career as governor of Lahore, having received the appointment from one of the Afghan Shahs, but he soon acquired independence and made himself master of the Punjab, and then extended his supremacy over neighbouring territories. In 1809 he made an alliance with the English, with whom he ever kept on friendly terms. In 1811 he turned his thoughts to Kashmir, partly because he had received overtures from the disaffected there, and partly incited thereto by an Afghan minister who thought to make a cat's-paw of him, by using his strength to get rid of an obnoxious governor,—for Afghanistan was at that time enjoying one of her periodical bouts of riotous anarchy, wherein every one did as seemed good to him at the expense of his neighbour.

A Lonely Summer in Kashmir

Ranjit Singh failed in his first attempt on Kashmir in 1811, and again in 1813, but he bided his time, and when, in 1819, he sent a strong force up under one of his most able generals, he was rewarded by gaining complete possession of the country.

It would be pleasant could one record that Kashmir's evil days were now over, and that with the advent of the Sikhs a time of prosperity began, but unfortunately it is not so; her worst rulers had gone but the new masters were far from good. The traveller Moorcroft, who visited Kashmir in 1822, gives a gloomy picture of what he saw there. Describing the entry of his party into Srinagar, he writes: "As we advanced, Surat Sinh was assailed by many clamorous appeals from the crowd, and hands were stretched out, and cries addressed to us, praying for our interference to save the inhabitants from starvation. An order, it appeared, had recently emanated from Raja Ranjit Singh prohibiting the sale of any of this year's crop of rice, until a deficit of five lakhs in the revenue of the preceding year had been discharged." And farther on he says: "Everywhere the people are in the most abject condition, exorbitantly taxed by the Sikh government, and subjected to every kind

of extortion and oppression by its officers. The consequences of this system are, the gradual depopulation of the country; not more than one sixteenth of the cultivable soil is in cultivation, and the inhabitants, starving at home, are driven in great numbers to the plains of Hindustan. In like manner the people of the city are rapidly thinning, though less from emigration than poverty and disease; the prevalence of the latter in its most aggravated forms being fearfully extensive." Hardly ever does Moorcroft pass through a village without commenting on its half deserted condition and the wretched appearance of its inhabitants.

Over and above the oppression of the Sikh rule Kashmir was visited by other ills against which the rulers could hardly guard. In 1827 came a severe earthquake, which was shortly followed by an outbreak of cholera; in 1831 a frightful famine carried off three-fourths of the population, and it was in its turn succeeded by disastrous floods.

In 1839 Ranjit Singh died; with his death the Sikhs lost their unity and the government of Lahore fell a prey to rival heirs. In 1843 the Sikh army in Kashmir was defeated by the Bombas, a brave but turbulent hill tribe; and, finally, in 1845–46, the whole Sikh power was

grappling in a death struggle with the advancing English might.

The Sikhs went down in the struggle ; their army was defeated at Sobraon (Feb. 1846) ; they made a treaty with their conquerors by which—among other things—Kashmir was ceeded to the English in part payment of a war indemnity ; and the British Government of the day (with a free-handedness which many Anglo-Indians have since regretted), straightway made over the country to the enterprising Raja of Jummu, Gulab Singh, with whose descendants it remains to this day.

The Dogra Rajput, Maharaja Gulab Singh, was a man of ambition and much force of character. Already previous to the events of 1846 he had enlarged his sovereignty by the conquest of Ladakh and Skardu, thus holding Kashmir half encircled. By skilful running with the hare and hunting with the hounds during the first Sikh war, he was able to make a favourable treaty with the English on the conclusion of hostilities. In return for 75 lakhs of rupees the independent sovereignty of Kashmir and all its dependencies was guaranteed to him by the British Government, in a treaty signed March 16, 1846 ; a treaty

which brought this advantage to the English that on the outbreak of the second Sikh war in 1849 (which resulted in the annexation of the Punjab), the British rulers were not hampered by any hostile demonstration from the north. Nevertheless the action of the English in parting with Kashmir has been a good deal criticised both at the time and since, for it was asked: What had the Raja of Jummu done for us that his territory should be thus largely increased? But it resolved itself really into a matter of expediency for the rulers at the time; they would have found it difficult to hold Kashmir with the Punjab still hostile, and the neighbouring hill territories independent; while it was also to their advantage to cripple the government of Lahore as much as possible, even at the cost of aggrandising another country.

Gulab Singh was a good ruler for Kashmir, caring for the welfare of his people and putting down robbery and oppression on the part of officials with a stern hand. The country after long ravaging felt the benefits of peace, and the exhausted people could once more breathe and turn their thoughts to industry. He remained faithful to the British alliance, and sent troops to help the English through

the troubled times of the Mutiny, until his death in 1857. He was succeeded by his son Ranbir Singh, also a good ruler, who did much to improve agriculture and bring new staples into Kashmir.

Ranbir Singh died in 1885, and was succeeded by his son, the present Maharaja Pratab Singh, a just ruler, who has gained the confidence of his people. He divides his time between Jummu and Kashmir, and resigns himself with as good grace as can be expected to the ever increasing number of English officials whom the paternal English "Raj" sends to help him with his government. Among the many improvements which this joint government of Indians and Europeans has introduced, perhaps the abolition of forced labour to Gilgit, the completion of the Murree road which links the country to India, and above all the Land Settlement for raising the status of the cultivators, so ably carried to a conclusion by Mr. W. R. Lawrence,* may be cited as likely to be productive of the greatest good for the welfare of the people.

* Now Sir Walter Lawrence, K.C.I.E.

History of Kashmir

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A good history of Kashmir has yet to be written; the materials for it lie scattered far and wide and await the master-builder's hand, to piece together into a perfect whole. It must suffice here to mention very briefly where some of these stray fragments can be found. For the period of the Hindu rule, a native chronicler, Kalhana, living in the twelfth century, has left a Sanscrit poem entitled the "Rajatarangini"; or, "River of Kings," a work of the highest interest, which has been lately (1900) most ably translated, amended, and annotated by Dr. Stein of Lahore. Dr. Stein's two volumes form a perfect monument of research, and are models of the way in which such work ought to be done; every statement of Kalhana's, whether true or false, is made to yield its quota of information in this able commentator's hands. Kalhana's narrative ends with the year 1150 A.D., after which the student feels as if suddenly thrust out of a rich banqueting-hall and bidden go feed upon stones, for though the Rajatarangini was carried on in succeeding centuries by three other writers who brought

the work down to the year 1588, yet these chroniclers are meagre and wanting in detail compared to Kalhana, neither have they yet found an interpreter like Dr. Stein to introduce them to an English public.

Besides the chronicles cited, there are Chinese itineraries, numismatical and archæological discoveries, all of which have helped and are helping to elucidate this period.

For the Moghul times, the lives of the great Emperors and many Persian chronicles are to be studied; and a loquacious Frenchman, named François Bernier, has left an account of his travels and adventures at the Court of Aurangzeb (1656–1668).

George Forster's Letters from Kashmir (1783) throw some little light on the cruel Afghan period; while for the Sikh occupation we have information from such travellers as W. Moorcroft (1819–1831); Victor Jacquemont (1828-1831); Baron Hügel (1835); and G. T. Vigne (1835).

Added to these Drew's "Kashmir and Jummoo Territories," and General Cunningham's works on the coins and ancient geography of India will be found of much assistance; and any student who has perused so far will find himself in

a position to search further for himself and be no longer in need of finger-posts.

The ordinary traveller who wishes only to gain an outline of the history, past and present, of the country in which he is travelling, will find all his reasonable wants well satisfied by W. R. Lawrence's excellent "Valley of Kashmir," and Dr. Arthur Neve's handy "Guide to Kashmir, Ladakh, Scardo, &c.," which can be purchased at Lahore for about two rupees.

CHAPTER IV

MARTAND

WHEN I awoke from my pleasant sleep in the Achibal garden, I found the coolie fussing with my tiffin basket—the man was always trying to feed me—and the gardener of the grounds also stood near and was looking down on me benignly while he waited for my awakening to present me with a little basket of watercress, a bundle of asparagus, and a posy of pink roses. I gained respite from the coolie's attentions by bidding him go and make a fire to cook the asparagus, a performance which kept him happy for half an hour, meantime I talked, as best I could with my scant knowledge of the language, to the gardener, a decidedly attractive character. He showed me a bundle of letters and testimonials he had received from former distinguished visitors to Achibal, Lord Roberts, Lord Lansdowne, Baden Powell, and many others. It is surprising how these natives,

though unable to read English, can always point out the signatures of celebrities in their books; successive visitors noting and commenting on the names doubtless impress the fact on their memories.

Lunch over, and the gardener's heart made glad by a present of four annas (about fourpence), we resaddled the reluctant pony, and, in spite of the midday heat, got once more on the journey, for I wished to reach the famous ruins of Martand before sunset. The path led for some time through fields and by a pleasant winding stream, then it rose abruptly to a tract of ground very characteristic of the Kashmir valley. This was a perfectly flat tableland, some miles in extent, which we reached by a steep and sandy path too steep for me to ride, and emerged on an open plateau at a far higher level than the plain we had left. There are numerous similar tablelands at the base of the mountains in Kashmir, and the explanation of their existence is, that at one time the whole valley was one vast lake, and these flat expanses, now so high and dry, were then part of the bottom of this ancient lake. Though these tablelands are mostly highly cultivated, yet the wide expanse of land and horizon, broken with but few trees, and the straight

path visible across it from end to end, brought back vividly to my recollection the broad tracts of moorland with which we are so familiar at home.

It was four o'clock when I reached Martand, and a storm-cloud which had been drifting up the valley came at this moment between us and the sun, and prevented me from seeing these splendid ruins at their best. Yet in sunshine or storm they can never be wanting in grandeur: standing as they do in an isolated position on a long green slope which projects from the mountain chain behind, they are plainly visible from a long way off, and on a nearer approach seem to dominate the whole landscape. The date of this temple, like that of most others in Kashmir, is the subject of speculation, the eighth century after Christ appearing to be the one now favoured by archæologists. The body of the temple, which is of imposing dimensions, stands in a spacious quadrangle, which, roughly speaking, is 200 feet long by 150 feet broad. There are eighty-four carved pillars to the colonnade forming this quadrangle, many of which now lie prostrate on the ground; and what impressed me most, both here and in other temples in Kashmir, was the immense size of the blocks used in building, blocks which one would

THE RUINS OF MARTAND

Face p. 65

think could have only been quarried and put into position by a race of giants. It is sheer massiveness, more than outline of form and details of carving, which to my mind gives these temples their grandeur.

I wandered through and round the buildings, and paced the great recumbent stones and kept a keen look-out for snakes, and was frightened in return by many a harmless lizard, until it was time to be moving on again; and once more I got into the saddle, and in half an hour reached Bawan, which lay picturesquely tucked away in the valley. The tents were pitched in a lovely camping-ground, shaded by tall cedar trees, and while waiting for tea I glanced round with interest to see what my new house was like, a house which, like a snail, I was to drag about with me for several weeks under varying changes of scenery.

The present tent, which I had hired from an English agency in Srinagar, was ten feet by ten, and was supported by two poles; it was of a kind very familiar to Anglo-Indians, and is known as a double tent, that is to say that over the first tent, which actually forms the room, was stretched a strong outer canvas roof, stout enough to keep off sun and any amount of rain. There is the space of a

foot between these two canvases, and it needs some experience to get them properly fixed on the poles and the numerous ropes and pegs pulling evenly in the right direction; fortunately, putting up tents is a process with which both coolies and servants in Kashmir are very familiar, so the prudent traveller quietly learns all he can by close observation, and then pretends he had known it all along.

The inside of this little mansion looked cosy, though not spacious; two Kashmir felt rugs made a gay colour on the ground, and kept one from too close contact with mother earth; on the right stood my small camp bed, over which a thick fox rug shed a dignity which raised it almost to the level of a couch by day; on the left was a folding dinner-table, covered also by a blue Kashmir cloth; two upright wooden chairs and a canvas deck-chair summed up the rest of the furniture, while the two new kiltas flanked the entrance like substantial door-posts. A strap studded with iron hooks round one of the tent-poles formed an effective hanging wardrobe; for the rest, most of my clothes remained in the portmanteau in which they travelled, getting much tossed and crumpled in consequence.

At some little distance in the background stood the two

small tents for the servants, close to which three flat stones and a hole in the ground formed an effective kitchen range, where a fire now burned brightly and the kettle was merrily singing. Up in the tree above swung the meat safe, carefully closed against marauding squirrels and birds.

Hardly had I finished my tea, which I drank at my own front door under the shade of the projecting awning, when an intellectual looking native in flowing white drapery, came and introduced himself as the "tehsildar," and offered to show me the sacred tanks of fish close by. These stand in a quadrangle formed by a temple on one side and the ruins of rest-houses for pilgrims on the other, and are beautifully over-shadowed by trees. The attendants at the temple brought me *chappaties* and grain to throw to the fish, and these came surging in such a thick black mass that they almost jostled each other out of the water. It was quite possible to stroke them on their slimy grey backs, so solidly were they packed, and when I held some food near the surface of the water it was torn from my hand at once, and instantly devoured by the greedy crowd.

There was only one being to whom the sight afforded no amusement, and that was my dear old white bull-dog;

he had a great weakness for *chappaties* (flat, unleavened cakes) himself, and, like the schoolboy who saw the bears being fed on buns at the Zoo, he plainly expressed the opinion that it was "beastly waste." With yelps of indignation he danced round the side of the tank, and two or three times by a quick snatch at the water he succeeded in rescuing a cherished morsel from being dragged below; but amused as the natives really were we all had to pretend to ignore him, for dogs had no right in that sacred place.

No sooner had we finished with the tanks than the natives clamoured round to know if they should not show me the way to the caves. "How far was it?" I asked, for I had had a hard day's work. "Only half a mile along the road, and *all* Sahibs went to see them!" I yielded to the inevitable, and off we started at a sharp pace, six voluntary guides accompanying me, keeping up a continuous chatter, in which the beloved word "backsheesh" was often distinguishable. Had we been in France or Italy I think I should have feared to trust myself alone on a strange country road towards sundown with a crowd of unknown men, for none of my servants were with me; but in Kashmir one so quickly realises what an arrant coward the Kashmiri

FAKIRS

Face p. 71

is at heart, in spite of his fine physique, that I never once during my stay felt any of that bodily fear which a woman alone is apt to feel in most so-called civilised countries.

After ten minutes' brisk walk we climbed a steep path up the side of a cliff, and entered a long winding cave, the mouth of which stood about fifty feet above the road. We plunged into it single file after the first man had succeeded in lighting a wax taper; the passage went a long way into the mountain and seemed partly natural, partly artificially enlarged; the actual extent is over two hundred feet long, I believe, but I did not pursue to the bitter end, for it grew very damp and narrow, and would have necessitated the undignified action of crawling on hands and knees. At one place was a small recessed room, where the bones of some old hermit lay buried; after inspecting which we all did a right-about-face, and emerged into fresh air again. There were two smaller caves close by, which I took on the word of my guides, but went to see one farther along the road, which was also high up in the cliff, and had the entrance somewhat elaborately carved, while inside was a spacious vault which had been converted into a temple. It was very dark within, and not till my eyes had grown used to the

light did I notice that my dog had come in with me, and, according to Eastern theories, was polluting the place with his presence; but, with a cowardly feeling that it was no good running to meet calamity, I avoided looking at him, till some one should speak of the matter, and my guides refrained from speaking for fear of calling the priest's attention to the occurrence; and the priest, taking in the whole situation with the corner of his eye, affected to see nothing, for he had designs of getting a contribution out of me, while I again, being grateful for his forbearance, left a liberal "backsheesh" at parting; thus was mutual toleration practised, and all hearts made glad.

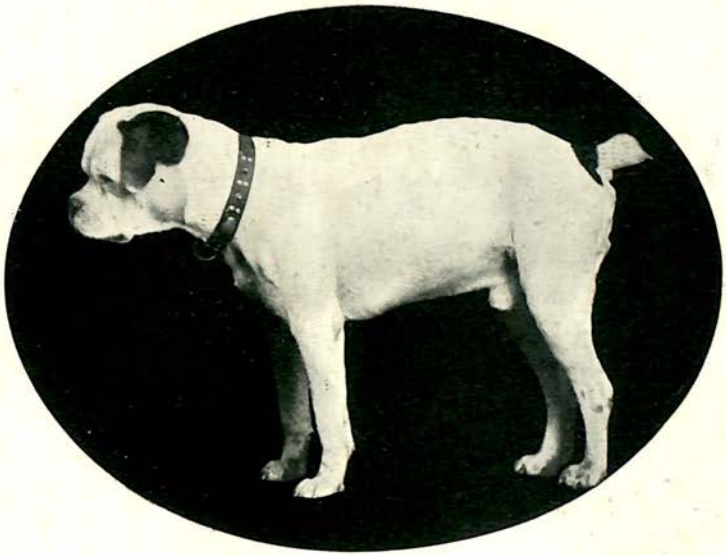
CHAPTER VI

CONCERNING JONES

NEXT morning I started at about eight o'clock on my second day's march; at first I had thoughts of waiting to see the tents struck and the luggage properly packed, but the coolies were in such a clamorous state of confusion, each grumbling over his load and making difficulties over everything, that I deemed it wiser to ride away and leave the brunt of this unpleasantness to the bearer, who was a stalwart man and one fond of authority. This bearer prided himself on being a "horsey" man, with a knowledge of everything pertaining to horseflesh, and would let no one but himself put me in the saddle. Knowing how careless natives are in such matters, I asked him before mounting if the girths were properly tight; with proud confidence in having done the right thing, the reply came promptly, "One is tight, one loose." He very naturally felt that such

an all-round policy must satisfy even the most exacting of Miss-sahibs. It was with genuine regret that I gave orders to undo this excellent arrangement for I saw how it confirmed his despair of ever grasping the inward workings of a European mind.

The road was still fairly on the level, and I cantered along a pleasant path, which wound alternately through villages and rice-fields for about ten miles. It was not an easy ten miles, for my pony had an action peculiar to himself; he seemed to make a canter with his hind legs and a species of double-shuffle with his fore-feet, resulting in a shaky motion to which it was impossible to rise. I perforce sat still and joggled for as long as I could bear it, then reduced him to a walk; I had not even the consolation of reflecting, like so many Anglo-Indian riders of rough-paced animals, that "it was good for the liver," for I am one of those happily constituted people who are totally unconscious of possessing that or any other article of internal economy; indeed, my attitude towards my own anatomy has always much resembled that of the careful mother who wrote to the schoolmistress about her daughter: "Please don't teach Mary Jane anything more



"JONES"

Face p. 75

about her inside, for it don't do no good, and it's rude." My passage through those peaceful Kashmir villages was not without a certain *éclat*, the sight of a lady on a side-saddle and riding alone was enough to turn out all the inhabitants to stare ; but when this vision was followed at a hundred paces by my ever-faithful bull-dog Jones, curiosity turned to panic, and there would be a general stampede and clearing of the course for his passage. And here a pause must be made to introduce a few words about Jones ; indeed, it is with a pang of conscience that I find myself through so many pages without having mentioned his name; his presence loomed large during my summer in Kashmir, and his companionship did much to make a lonely time bearable. To begin at the beginning, the term "my bull-dog" is in two senses misleading : firstly, he was not mine, but my brother's, lent to me only for this trip, from the hot plains of India ; and secondly, though the bull in him largely predominated, yet many other races had gone to make up his pedigree. When grinning subalterns at Srinagar and Gulmarg would ask me on the polo-stand what race I called him, I ignored the insult by replying in an off-hand way, "An Aligarh bull." This was true, for he

hailed from Aligarh, and there were no other bulls there to dispute his right ; but compared to one of the true English breed his head and chest were not massive enough, his legs were too long and straight, his nose measured nearly two inches instead of being flat up against his forehead, in fact, as his admirers were wont to say, "Jones is not so *deformed* as most bull-dogs." But in one characteristic of the race he yielded to none, and that was in extreme ugliness ; seldom did any one set eyes on him for the first time without an involuntary exclamation being drawn from them ; his small round eyes set wide apart, the great red scar which he would carry to his grave on one side of his forehead, mark of a Homeric fight ; the underhung lower jaw, from which one remaining white tooth projected grotesquely,—all these made up an exterior startling enough to strangers, but suggesting nothing repulsive to those who realised what a faithful little doggy heart beat beneath it. He was a dear companion to me, and for that reason I put his portrait on the frontispiece, though truth compels me to say that the likeness flatters him ; Jones is, in real life, there is no use denying it, "a little plainer about the head," as they say in Ireland.

Concerning Jones

I was often asked how he came by his name, and when any one sharing the same patronymic happened to be present the explanation was a little awkward. The truth is that at an early stage of his puppydom my brother had declared that such a very plebeian dog must have a plebeian name, so they tossed up, heads or tails, between "Jones" or "Smith," and "Jones" won.

The village of Eishmakam, which I reached about midday, and which concluded our day's march, lies on the right of the valley, on a steep incline of hill; an old monastery towers above it, commanding a good view of the valley. As my tiffin basket had not arrived I explored the neighbourhood on my pony; but the village was too steep, narrow and dirty to encourage inspection, and when I turned to a grassy knoll of hill close by, where I hoped to get a quiet resting-place, I found—as is so often the case in India—that it was used as a convenient spot to which to drive sick sheep and cattle, that they might die a lingering death away from the village; for the Eastern will kill no animal out of pity to spare its pain; so the ground was strewn with bleached skulls and gaping ribs, and it was as if we had entered a charnel-house; Jones' back bristled with fear, and the pony sniffed the ground

suspiciously. I turned away, sick at the sight, and sought the green camping-ground below the village, sheltered by walnut-trees; here I found a group of curious villagers collected to stare at me, and they gazed in rapt attention while I unsaddled the pony, turned the little fellow loose to graze, and settled myself under a walnut-tree with a saddle for a pillow. Finding the people after a time embarrassing, I sat up and explained in broken but forcible Hindustani that their presence was distasteful to me, and that they were to clear immediately; they regretfully dispersed by slow degrees, and I spread my umbrella for greater privacy and lay down to sleep, till the advent of the tiffin basket in an hour's time not only assuaged my hunger but by bringing also a book and my scribbling diary made me indifferent to the next long pause till the tents came in.

As usual the tehsildar came to make his salaams; what this official's duties to his own community are I cannot rightly say. He is credited with a good deal of civic responsibility; towards travellers his uses nominally are to provide coolies and supplies if wanted, but he adds thereto many works of supererogation, such as coming and introducing himself to every one who stops for only an hour in

the village, fussing and interrupting with useless advice while the tents are being put up, making presents of stale walnuts and sour apples, which have first to be ruinously paid for and afterwards thrown away, and finally grumbling unblushingly at whatever "backsheesh" his long-suffering victim may be teased into giving him at parting. Now, of all the tehsildars I met in my camping, this one at Eishmakam had the worst faults of his race in the highest stage of development. In the first place he had a villanous red beard of brick-coloured dye, a standing offence to one's sense of beauty; then a ponderous oily manner, off which snubs glanced like drops of water from a duck's back; repeatedly I told him to be gone, as I wished to enjoy some privacy in my tent, and he would salaam unctuously and retire, only to reappear in half an hour on some flimsy pretext or other. He showed me with pride next morning his list of testimonials from former travellers, and through the faint words of praise I could read between the lines that my predecessors had found him as great an infliction as I had. I scorned them for their weakness, and wondered why they had not boldly written their true thoughts down; and yet the nerve to write a man down "a confounded

bore" while he is looking over your shoulder, must be as rare as four-o'clock-in-the-morning courage; for when, before starting, the man put book and pen in my hands and held the inkpot for my convenience, my determination to write something really caustic fizzled away also, and I merely put "the tehsildar has been *over* attentive."

The journey on this day's march was far more beautiful than heretofore; the mountains close in on both sides of the valley, and the path winds all day by the side of the rushing Liddar, a joyous foaming torrent which tumbles helter-skelter down from the snows, over great boulders smooth with age, now and then bearing a bridge away in flood-time, for it is reckless and light-hearted, never once moving sluggishly in its course of nearly fifty miles—all this in exceeding anxiety to join company with the Jhelum down in the broad fertile valley below. For six weeks I lived within sound of these rushing waters, seeing them from start to finish, and at the end they possessed almost the feeling of a living personality for me.

The direction of the Liddar valley is north and south, and it was curious to note how the pine-trees, into whose zone we were now coming, grew always on the northward-

facing slopes of the mountain spurs; the rest were bare, so as I rode northwards it was chiefly a vista of green-clad hills which met the sight, but on turning and looking backwards the mountain sides were clothed with dark pine-trees. The path dipped up and down by the side of the torrent, sometimes close to the water's edge, at others rising steeply and hanging sheer over it. It was at one of these latter places that my apparently sweet-tempered pony played off a practical joke on me which I was far from appreciating at the time. It was our third day together and he had shown no vice, and, as is my usual habit with animals, I was flattering myself that I had made a favourable impression, when, for some unaccountable reason, as I had gone as usual to pat him that morning before mounting, he had started back as if terrified, and pulled so vigorously that I had to leave go the reins and allow the men to catch him again. I attributed this to my having on a dark dress for the first time, and also perhaps black gloves. When I mounted I came up quietly from behind, so that he did not see me, and we got off without difficulty. I had completely forgotten this early morning episode when we came to a place where the path zigzagged steeply up the hill; it was quite narrow, and the

hill dropped sheer away to the torrent fifty or sixty feet below; there had been heavy rain the night before, and in many parts the ground seemed loose and inclined to slip. I had not as yet acquired the nerve which I afterwards attained in riding mountain paths, and when we had reached the summit of the spur and the path began to dip with the same precipitousness down the other side, I slipped off, preferring to lead my pony down the hill till safer ground was reached, when to my dismay he began a repetition of his morning performance. I held on with all my strength to the reins and tried coaxing, but he backed away from me in a panic, regardless of where he was going. It was pretty evident that on a path only a few feet wide these antics would land at least one of us over the edge of the cliff in a few moments; clearly one must cede his will to the other, and it was not the moment—with a yawning chasm at one's elbow, not to speak of the torrent—to overpass the delicate line which separates perseverance from obstinacy. I loosed the rein, therefore, and waited with curiosity to see what the mulish little fellow would do; to my no small dismay he turned and trotted down the path we had come, "like the pig in 'Alice,'" I murmured with disgust, as he was

soon too hopelessly out of reach for me to try to catch him again. That I felt pretty foolish at being thus left without my steed I need hardly say; but in the end no great harm was done, for after a quarter of a mile he met the tiffin coolie on the road, who guessed what had happened and caught him without difficulty.

It was on this march that I first fell in with the Gujar people; those picturesque goat-herds with their handsome flocks numbering several hundred head. Not like the ordinary short-haired goat were these, but big, high-standing animals, with long sweeping hair, some brown, some pearly grey, some black. I liked all the Gujar folk I met; they were picturesque, and seemed a race apart from the Kashmiris. Both men and women dressed in the same dark blue cotton cloth, which had a red stripe running through it. The women wore loose baggy trousers like the Turkish women, and carried a profusion of ornaments round their necks, silver chains and blue beads, and coral and turquoise necklaces; also broad silver bands round their arms. They were upright handsome women for the most part, not ashamed to look the stranger in the face, and with an inborn dignity and courtesy of manner which is very grateful to

the European, after contact with the cringing servility of the Indian native. The men I noticed often had that far-away look in their eyes common to sailors and those used to a wide horizon. They were careful of their flocks, and herded them in with strange calls and long far-sounding whistles which echoed far round on the mountain side; often if a goat of the flock was lame or a young kid too tired for the journey, the shepherd would sling the weary animal over his shoulders and carry him for a few miles—a living representation of the parable of the lost sheep.

My first introduction to these people was of rather a rough kind; the path lay through a flat grassy dell overgrown with short bushes; some way from the road I could just detect what I took to be a gipsy encampment, for there was an old canvas tent, and smoke was rising among the trees; suddenly six or eight enormous dogs, as big as mastiffs only with thick bushy hair, sprang out into the road, and with angry snarls and all their teeth showing made a set at Jones, who was running hot and tired behind me. The attack was so sudden that my pony reared and shied; as soon as I had quieted him I turned anxiously to see how much of my poor dog was left; to my surprise Jones was standing stock

GOATS AT PAHLGAM

BOY WITH BUFFALO

Face p. 84

still in the middle of the road, quite unconcerned while the large dogs snarled round him, but feared to bite. Had he run he would have probably been torn to pieces, but he had not been reared in a land of *pie-dogs* in vain, and knew that all this savage noise counted for nothing if met by a bold front. He was attacked over and over again in this way in Kashmir, and never showed the least concern; in fact, if there were a lady among the attacking party he would sometimes rakishly wag his stump of a tail and make for her with cocked ears, to the unspeakable indignation of the male dogs who did not dare drive him off. The Gujars were always very civil, and would come forward to apologise and did their best to keep the dogs in hand.

After thirteen miles' ride through scenery which became wilder and more beautiful at every step, I reached the pretty camping-ground below the village of Pahlgam, where Europeans now often make permanent encampments through the summer. There is a stretch of broad grassland by the river for about a mile; above this, on the lower slopes of the pine-clad hill, visitors pitch their camps wherever they can find a space flat enough to rest a tent; flowers and pine-needles strew the ground, and wild strawberries

grow in abundance, while above, the tall pine-trees give a welcome shade. I saw the glint of white tents here and there among the trees, and knew I had one or two acquaintances among them, but they were scattered far apart, and I did not wish to waste time hunting round among the camps, so I left the path and turned up-hill into the wood to see what ground was available. After five minutes' steep climb I came to a delightful little terrace, which had evidently been levelled the year before to hold three tents; there was a shady spot for my own tent, and room some few yards behind for those of the servants; the ground was clean, and there was no possibility of any one camping immediately above me, which for sanitary reasons is important where Indian servants are concerned. I determined to take possession on the spot; but thinking it rash not to reconnoitre other places first, I tied the pony to a tree, took off the saddle and made Jones lie down on guard; he took up a very dignified position, like a Landseer lion in Trafalgar Square; and as I caught a glimpse of him from time to time between the trees, I felt it would be a bold squatter who would venture to jump my claim when left under such a protector. As nothing I saw pleased me half so well as the

first site, I returned to it and found the coolies hurrying in from the march ; there was a thunder-storm brewing, and all worked hard to get the tents up before the rain came to soak the ground ; we had hardly got the last peg driven home and the furniture inside, when the storm broke, and glad I was to know that my bedding and wardrobe were safely under cover, for there are no facilities for drying in camp life.

CHAPTER VII.

LIFE AT PAHLGAM

It was a lovely sight which greeted me next morning when I emerged from the tent; the air was fresh and pure after the rain, and the sunshine glinted down pleasantly through the trees; my servant had placed the breakfast-table under a large pine-tree; under foot was a soft carpet of pine-needles, and the scent of the pines pervaded the air. Through an opening in the branches I could see the opposite side of the valley rising steep upwards, dark with trees at the bottom, and jagged and bare at the top; down in the bottom the Liddar babbled pleasantly, his roar softened to a murmur by the distance.

Some hundred yards below my terrace stood an encampment of two tents, outside of which a young terrier was performing the self-imposed task of herding together some young calves. They had been turned loose by the villagers

to graze, and he had no manner of right to interfere with their freedom; but he put his whole heart into the work with the conscientiousness of an old sheep dog, trotting round and round to prevent any of the group breaking away, interfering the moment one put his head down to eat, and casting the while longing eyes at the tents for some signs of approbation. Fortunately for the calves, Jones soon sauntered down to say how d'you do, and they made good their escape while the first canine greetings were still being exchanged.

Had I but the pen of a ready writer I feel it would be possible to make a good deal of very effective writing out of camp life in Pahlgam; the line to adopt would be to contrast our simple unsophisticated mode of living with the luxury and artificiality of town existence. We held no secrets from each other there, each knew how his neighbour lived and slept. For instance, every morning after breakfast my bearer brought out my bedding and hung it to air on a tent-rope stretched from tree to tree; my neighbours could see for themselves that I possessed besides sheets, a pair of wadded quilts, a cheap red blanket and a travelling rug, as clearly as if they had assisted in the bed-

making; then, in the matter of feeding, every camp hung its meat-safe in its favourite tree, and it would have been idle to waste time in speculating how your neighbour fared when a glance at his larder revealed, as clearly as if you had been handed the *menu*, that he had struggled with a tough leg of mutton the night before, was meditating chicken curry for dinner, and that there were the remains of a cold rice pudding to be disposed of at lunch. Kashmir is a country ruled by a Hindu Rajah, so, though cattle abound, no beef may be eaten throughout his land, therefore mutton, mutton—sometimes chicken for a change—then mutton again, is the fare week-in, week-out, throughout the year. The domestic wag who was wont to nod *au revoir* as the cold leg of mutton was carried from the table, would have palled of his joke in this country long before the mutton wearied of reappearing; and an announcement that you had discovered a new way to do up cold mutton was a surer way to galvanise a languid tea-party into the liveliest state of expectancy than any allusion to the most recent scandal. There was always an added bond of sympathy between myself and a certain family from the day we discovered that we were each accustomed to cut off a slice

from the thick end of a leg of mutton, and call it grilled rump-steak ; it showed that our thoughts chimed in unison over a pleasant deception. Vulgar display was out of the question when a hostess on giving a dinner-party had invariably to ask her visitors to bring plates and mugs with them, but on the other hand it gave her an opportunity, denied to a Mayfair hostess, of showing a tender solicitude in seeing that each guest at parting got his own property safely back, and was not having an inferior article palmed off into his basket by her own servants, a favourite trick with native domestics.

House-keeping was not difficult at Pahlgam, for there were sufficient people in the summer to make it worth the while of one or two Srinagar shopkeepers to open a tent there for the sale of groceries. It is wonderful how attractive a small store of goods can appear to one fresh from the wilds ; the new-comer is generally seized with a desire to purchase the whole stock in trade offhand, and for days shoe-blacking and salad-oil have a seductiveness quite unusual to them. Close to the two stores was a tent for the post-office, so ragged and full of holes that it was a marvel any rain was kept out, and so small that two men

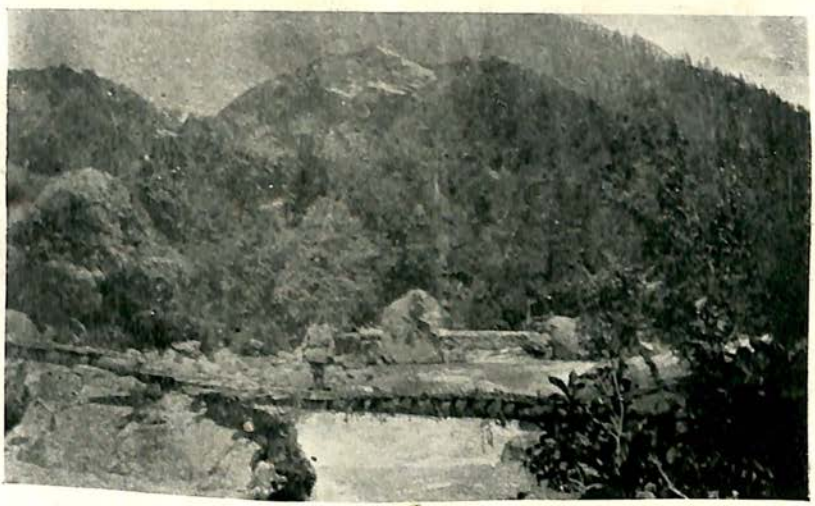
and a table took up every inch of room, despite of which a formidable notice informed the passer-by that there was "no admission." On a tree opposite, hung the pillar-box, with lying information as to the time of clearing; these formed the sum-total of our public buildings, and insignificant as they may appear, they yet formed a pleasant centre of attraction on a wet day. When rain had been coming down heavily for hours, and the ground was so slippery that it was difficult to keep one's feet, people would come down by twos and threes at about seven o'clock, and grumble at the weather, and buy bulls-eyes at one of the shops to pass the time till the mail-bag came in. As soon as that happened there was a buzz like a swarm of bees round the postmaster, who would at once squat down outside his tent and sort out the letters on the ground; every one looked over his shoulder and pounced on his or her letters as they appeared, and only the pathetic appeals of the poor man to be allowed first to do his duty prevented people from carrying them off before they had received the official stamp; of course, if any one felt curious to know how this simple act was performed he was welcome to wet the block on the

pad as the two lay together on the grass and stamp his letters himself.

Often when I have been extolling the pleasures of tent life, people have asked me, "But what do you do in wet weather?" Well, in wet weather we did much the same as people do in houses, viz., sat and grumbled until it was over, and then forgot all about it when the sun shone again; but there is no denying that a tent is very uncomfortable in the rain, and that is the time you begin to long for solid walls. When a storm begins, the first thing is to see that the ropes are all tight, and the pegs well driven home, for if the ground becomes soft the pegs may very easily loosen; then a glance should be given to the trench around the tent to be sure that it is deep enough to drain away all the water which would otherwise come inside. After that there is nothing further to do but sit down and listen to the ceaseless pattering of drops on the canvas, which in the night-time becomes almost deafening. But if you are inclined to grumble and be sorry for yourself, you feel slightly ashamed when the time for the next meal comes round, for then your servant comes with the dishes across the forty or fifty yards of sodden ground from the kitchen tent, with perhaps only

a duster on his head to keep his turban dry, the only warm suit he possesses getting soaked with the rain, and the wet oozing in and out of the sandals which he leaves at the door as he steps bare-footed into the tent. The rain may come down in sheets, but he never scamps a single item, or asks you to do with one plate less because of the weather; the soup arrives nearly as hot as usual, covered over by another plate; the gravy round the meat comes safely without the dilution of raindrops, and however many narrow escapes the vegetables and pudding may have on the way in the perilous passage from tent to tent, no untoward accident ever befalls them at the hands of an Indian servant. And no grumbling is heard or complaints made however long this lasts, though two or three men huddled together in a small single tent cannot have a very comfortable time, having nothing but their blankets between them and the damp ground (for furniture is never supplied to Indian servants, it is needless to say); also the fire that is so cheerful to collect round in dry weather is useless for them in the rain, for they dare not bring it too near the tent; they take it all with Eastern stoicism, coming perhaps on the third day to tell you they have fever, and asking for quinine.

BOY AND GOAT



Face p. 94 A BRIDGE OVER THE LIDDAR

On two or three occasions we had three consecutive days' rain at Pahlgam, and then the outlook appeared pretty desperate; moisture came up through the ground, and there was not a single thing but exuded damp; boots and boxes were green with mildew, and the only dry clothes were those one carried on one's back. I grumbled to a friend one day about the cruelty of finding clothes which one had put off dry the night before clammy and damp the next morning, and she told me the only way she found it possible to have dry things in the morning was to roll her clothes up and put them under the pillow when she undressed at night. I adopted the plan and found it answer, for although there is a certain stuffiness about the suggestion to our English minds, yet this was better than running the risk of a severe attack of rheumatic fever.

In the matter of spiritual care we were a fatherless flock for the first few weeks I was at Pahlgam; for the fourth Sunday a missionary came up who had undertaken to hold services there for a month. He was an elderly man, evidently well used to these out-of-the-way missions; for no sooner were his tents up, and his wife and daughter comfortably established, than he sent a notice round to each

camp stating the hour the services would be held, and with it the missionary clock, so that we might all be of one mind as regard to time. This was an invaluable precaution in a community where each one's watch was a law unto himself, and where one camp would differ from another by more than an hour ; so that when asked out to tea or dinner it was necessary to send round early in the afternoon to find out what o'clock your hosts made it ; and though, when a newcomer arrived from Srinagar, he was always appealed to to correct our ignorance, his information at the best was three days old. The post-office should have been our rallying-ground, but unfortunately there they forgot at least twice a week to wind their timepiece, and the postmaster would run out clock and key in hand to catch the first passer-by ; and however wide of the mark this one's answer might be, it became the official time for the next few days.

Accompanying the notification of the hour of the services was a polite request that each member of the congregation would bring his own chair, for though the clergyman kindly lent his private tent for the services, to provide seats for every one was beyond his power, and a curious

sight it was towards eleven o'clock on Sunday morning to see the congregation strolling churchwards through the trees, the native servants a little in advance bearing every description of camp-chair. They mustered nearly twenty for the morning service, but a cold prevented me from going till the evening, when the total congregation numbered only six. It was one of those simple, heartfelt services which often carry more conviction than does a sonorous Cathedral choir ; the speaker's voice within the tent was earnest, and outside all nature lay at peace. Once only was a disturbance threatened, when a cow looked in at the opening, and again when a drove of hobbled ponies got entangled in the tent ropes, threatening the stability of the whole edifice ; but that danger also passed.

Perhaps in the one matter of the hymn was there revealed a less unanimous feeling than was to be desired among such a small congregation ; there was no musical instrument to start us, so after giving out the number of the hymn, the clergyman cast an appealing glance to the most elderly lady present, whom one instinctively felt would be a pillar of strength in such emergencies, and plunged boldly into the tune himself. The lady responded with spirit to

the call, but unfortunately pitched the key so high that it was beyond the power of most of us to rise to it; there was a brief struggle, during which we tried to make her descend to our lower level, but she stuck to her first intention with a tenacity worthy a better cause, and we meekly yielded to the stronger will, joining in heartily as far as we were able, halting on the threshold when it soared away into regions far beyond our ken, and rejoicing when we were once more able to fall in behind our leader.

Pahlgam is perhaps the one place in Kashmir where the time-worn complaint of the lack of men holds good. Though male visitors to the country must be largely in the majority, yet do they not settle at Pahlgam, they either disperse up the valleys to shoot, or keep to Srinagar and Gulmarg for polo and golf; Pahlgam is resorted to by people travelling *en famille*, who wish to avoid the fatigue and expense of constant marching, or the extra outlay which a stay at Gulmarg entails. In my time there, every camp seemed to be provided with a pretty girl, either daughter or friend; and often in my life as I have wished that I had been born a boy, never did I more wish it than when I met these charming damsels day after day, and knew how dull

they found the place; it would have been so much pleasanter for us all could I have changed sexes, and our mutual admiration would have gone up by geometrical progression. It was impossible to make things livelier for them, the few men there were being naturally shy of being asked out to meet a bevy of girls; for there is this curious difference between a man and a maid, that whereas a man among a lot of girls will, to use his own expression, "feel like a fool,"—and to do him justice generally looks it,—a girl among a circle of men will probably sparkle and be at her best. They had to content themselves with recollections of past gaieties down in the plains, or anticipations for the coming cold weather. Never was I so well entertained as on one long afternoon walk when a General's daughter and the daughter of a civilian were each seized with a spirit of rivalry, and tried to outvie the other in tales of past triumphs; to my surprise the General's daughter hauled down her colours first, and admitted with a sigh that her father had been moving too constantly to admit of her making "any great friends;"—though not expressly stated, I understood the word "friends" in this case to have a masculine significance.

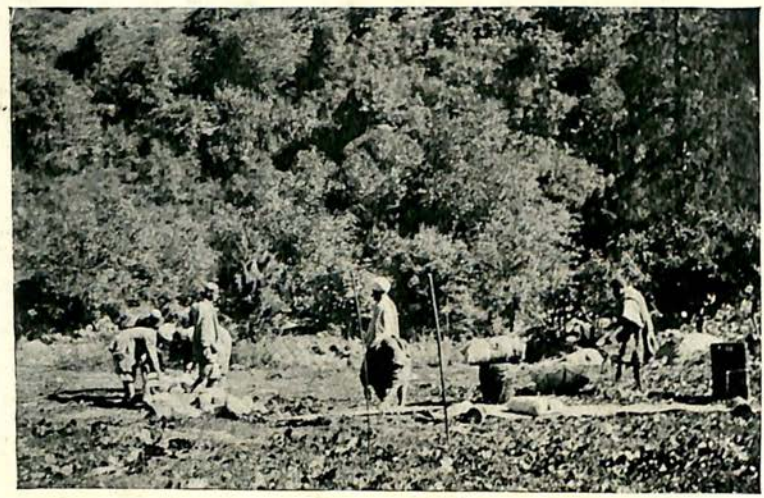
That ambiguity about the words "friend" and "cousin" in English is one of the weaknesses of the language. An acquaintance once told me that she had asked her parlour-maid to oblige her by altering the day of her holiday; but the girl pleaded that she could not, as she had agreed to meet a friend. "But write to your friend and ask if Thursday would not suit her as well as Friday," urged the mistress. The damsel drew herself up, and replied with haughty emphasis, "My friend is *not* a female!" and she stuck to the day.

Personally I had less cause to complain of Pahlgam, as my loneliness was for the time in abeyance; the day after my arrival a cheerful young married couple came and occupied the farther end of my terrace; only a narrow ditch divided our camps, and we soon struck up friendship. On the other side my friend Miss Barclay, the artist, came up from Srinagar, and pitched her tents close to mine, so the three camps formed a sociable community; we would dine outside together in the open when weather permitted, and afterwards collect round an immense bonfire of pine-wood, which cast a picturesque glow on the forest around and made conversation flow easily.

In spite of these attractions I grew restless after four weeks of this life, and was anxious to be moving onwards; the valley was very shut in, and I wanted to see more of the mountains; as it was not likely that I would ever be again in Kashmir, I had determined to see as much as possible during my stay. Vainly I inquired for likely travellers with whom I might join forces, but none others were seized with the desire to explore, on the contrary every one proposed returning quietly to Srinagar by the way they had come; under these circumstances I determined to push on alone and take the western branch of the Liddar Valley which leads to the Kolohoi glacier, and after viewing that work my way over a pass which drops down into the Sind Valley, and so regain Srinagar. There is no difficulty about this route when the snow is once melted; but this year it seemed to lie everywhere unusually late, and I could get no definite news that the pass was open; a few coolies were said to have crossed, but on the other hand report gave out that two army officers who had attempted to come over from the Sind into the Liddar had been compelled to turn back. I need hardly say that no sooner did I speak of my intention than I was earnestly dissuaded from it on all hands; I was

warned that the pass was too rough for ladies, that it was not safe for me to travel alone, that the coolies would run away and leave me and the luggage alone on the mountain. It is a curious trait in human nature that whenever people are not embarking on an undertaking themselves they are always eager to prophesy failure to those who are. Perhaps on this occasion I might have let myself be over-persuaded, (for it was my first experience in mountain climbing, and the *rôle* of solitary explorer which had been thrust upon me was none of my choosing) had I not seen in the guide-book a reference to another less frequently used pass, which led by the mountain-lake of Tar Sar over into the Nagberan Valley, and by this I determined to work my way to Srinagar should the Sind route be closed.

In this resolution I was strengthened by my bearer, a stalwart young Mohamedan, who had been in the country before, and who undertook to make all arrangements with the coolies and bring the whole party safely through.



MAKING READY FOR THE MARCH

LOADED FOR THE MARCH

Face p. 103

CHAPTER VIII

UP THE LIDDAR VALLEY

THE air was crisp and the sky absolutely blue and cloudless the morning I left Pahlgam, for there had been a heavy thunder-storm with much rain over night which had cleared the atmosphere. Any forebodings I may have felt over night about the wisdom of my trip vanished like thin mist before the sun. It would have been rank ingratitude to doubt anything on such a lovely morning, and as I stepped outside my tent my only feeling was one of delight at being once more on the move. I breakfasted for the last time on my fern-surrounded terrace, with the fragrant carpet of pine-needles under foot, and watched the tents being rapidly dismantled, and the furniture resolving itself once more into travelling bundles. As the marching which lay before us would often be steep and rugged, it had been decided that we should only use coolie transport this time, for ponies

have a way of sometimes dropping over the cliff, and then, added to the sad death of the pony, the traveller may have to lament the loss of half his bedding or furniture. Only a week before a little lady had returned in tears from an otherwise successful expedition up the valley, because her saucepans had gone down the torrent; and how can a stout English husband be kept in health and good temper on his holiday when there is no wherewithal to cook him a good dinner?

So the bearer engaged about a dozen coolies, and to speak the truth they were as grumbling, lazy and good-for-nothing a set as any I ever had to deal with; each tried to shirk his load and put some of it on to another man, and they never got off on a march without endless quarrelling among themselves and with the servants; they had none of the jolly, happy-go-lucky air common to most Kashmiris, whose love of a joke and ready laugh makes one condone so many of their villainies. Nearly every Pahlgam man I met had a shifty, cringing look or a scowl upon his face.

I called a last good-bye to my friends who had not yet left their tents at this early hour, then mounted the pony who was to carry me for the next five days. He was a fat,

shock-headed little fellow, with all the airs and appearance of a child's pet. In England he would have been said to be far too small for my weight, but he was really quite equal to carrying a man. His bridle consisted of a thin iron bit and three pieces of string, and he had a playful habit of champing his bit till he got it outside his teeth, and then with a few more movements got it clear of his mouth altogether. He looked so pretty and naughty when he had done this that every time he achieved the trick both I and the boy in charge of him were too much fascinated to reprove him seriously. We would excuse our own weakness by smilingly calling him a "butcha" (child), and replace the bit in his mouth. It mattered very little, I found, if the bridle sent with a pony was so slight as to be almost useless; for a mountain pony is best left almost entirely unguided; they can be trusted to find the best path for themselves, and any holding up down hill, such as might be needful with an English horse, only causes them to stumble, for then they cannot see the ground.

Above Pahlgam the valley branches into two. I followed the left or western branch, towards the mountain of Kolohoi. It was a delightful ride on that sunny morning, past green

slopes where wild roses were blooming, through stretches of woodland, up and down the rough mountain path, following the windings of the valley; the opposite slope was steep and pine-clad; between us lay the foaming torrent, bursting its way through giant boulders, the pleasant roar of its waters always with us, sometimes so loud as to be nearly deafening when the path took a sudden dip close to the river bed, then the sound would sink to a far-off murmur as we rose steeply several hundred feet above it. Sometimes the cliff was so steep that we could look down straight upon the torrent as it lay several score feet perpendicularly below us; at other places the banks shelved away in grassy slopes, but so smooth that once started no man or animal could have been saved from slipping to the bottom. I have no love for dangerous places, and often when coming suddenly round a corner and seeing what lay before me I would have willingly got off and walked past the dangerous places, but there was seldom room for this manœuvre, for all that day the precipice lay on my left, and the pony had the fancy, shared seemingly by all mountain animals, for the outer edge of the path; he was never quite so happy as when trailing one leg over the cliff. It is one of the mysteries of mountain riding, and can

only be explained on Mr. Andrew Lang's hypothesis of the "perversity of inanimate objects," that when the rider is a lady the precipice will invariably come on the left side, so that in a case of sudden emergency on a narrow path there is nothing but a yawning chasm on which to dismount. This fact alone often led me to wish that I had supplied myself with a man's saddle for these remote regions. A light Cawnpore saddle would have been half the weight of the one I rode; one could have flung oneself much quicker from it on either side when necessary; it would have been a less tiring position when the whole day was being spent on horseback, and in a country where *all* women ride in this fashion it would have created far less notice than a side-saddle. It was on this ride that my coolie taught me the trick, familiar, I suppose, to all mountain riders, of taking a good hold of the horse's mane when going up a steep incline. It seems to relieve the strain for the rider, and I should think must make the weight easier for the pony, even in spite of the temporary strain on his back hair.

We overtook many parties of Gujars who had passed through Pahlgam a few days previously, and were taking their flocks up to the higher pastures. Several recognised

me and nodded pleasantly; none of them ever begged. I saw few more picturesque sights in Kashmir than these shepherd people's encampments; a low canvas tent and a few cut branches leaning together would serve for shelter; bright wood fires burned close by, over which the women boiled the family rice or made flat girdle-cakes. Half-naked handsome children skipped about among the rocks, as active as the young goats they were herding; the boys often putting me in mind of the early Italian paintings of John the Baptist when a child. Their long-haired flocks, on the other hand, as they raised their heads from feeding to watch us pass, often amused me by the prim old-maidish look the long drooping ears gave to the face; it was suggestive of the way our grandmothers wore their hair in early Victorian days.

There are drawbacks to having these picturesque people in a neighbourhood, for after the passage of their flocks the whole hill-side looks and smells unmistakably "goaty"; the ground is soiled, grass and flowers vanish, and places which a few days before had been green and flourishing, look as if a blight of locusts had passed over them. To sportsmen their presence is still more objectionable, for the smell of the goats drives the bears up the mountains, and the further the

flocks go for fresh pastures, still further must the huntsman go after his quarry.

By one o'clock I reached Aro, the first camping ground; it consisted of not more than half a dozen log huts, very roughly put together, and quaintly suggestive of the "Prehistoric Peeps" in *Punch*; giant slabs of wood lay tumbled promiscuously on each other for a roof, being held down in their place by large stones, and unhewn logs formed the sides of the buildings. Above these huts a grassy spur of land at the junction of two valleys gave the site for a good camping-ground, of which one spruce khaki tent was already in possession. The owners were apparently away, but a polite Indian servant came out and offered me tea; as I had my own tiffin basket with me I declined his kind offer, and settled for lunch under the only available fir-tree; this stood on a steep bank shelving down towards the torrent, so that I had much ado to keep myself and the basket from rolling down the slope, and caused Jones to cast many a ludicrous, wrinkled look of reproach at me for choosing such an uncomfortable spot; but the customary afternoon thunder-storm was beginning, and I wished to keep as dry as possible until the tents came in; it is a red-

letter day in these parts when a storm does not take place. After half an hour of this situation a fair-haired, ruddy Englishman came up and cordially invited me to come and share the one tent he and his wife occupied. I thankfully accepted, and spent a pleasant hour giving them the latest news from Srinagar and Pahlgam, and hearing in return of their bear shooting, and what the chances were of getting across the snow into the Sind Valley. When my tent was up I left with an armful of English newspapers, the most welcome of all forms of literature to one who has been cut off from it for weeks ; I read them, advertisements and all, from cover to cover, and as they were not more than six weeks old felt myself well up to date in all that was passing in the great world. After tea I met my kind friends again, strolling over the green with two golf balls, and one club between them ; they insisted on my joining, though then a total stranger to that fascinating game, and so there in the wilds of Kashmir, a few hundred miles from anywhere, and with one club between three, I had my first lesson in golfing, and learned the joy of a successful "drive," and the sore trials of being "bunkered" ; I have since become an enthusiast of the game, but, alas ! no expert.

CHAPTER IX

LIDDARWART AND KOLOHOI

THE next morning when I wished to start the coolies were in revolt; they declared that it was impossible for them to go with such heavy loads, and clamoured for me to engage two more men. In vain I tried to point out that the luggage had not augmented in the night, that what they had easily borne yesterday they could bear again to-day; they pointed up to the snow, and said that a great deal had fallen in the night; I admitted the fact, but remarked that as our road lay still in the valley that hardly affected the question; I even tried sarcasm with my scanty stock of language, and asked what objection they had to looking up at the snow, to me it was very pleasing in its right place. It was all to no purpose; the "lumbadar" of the place came up and united his voice to theirs, and said my future marches would be too rough for the men, they must have lighter loads, so for

peace and quietness I gave in, and we engaged one extra man on condition that after this they should make no further demands. This brought my total up to fourteen coolies, and I realised that on future occasions I must lighten my luggage considerably, so as to travel with more ease and cheapness.

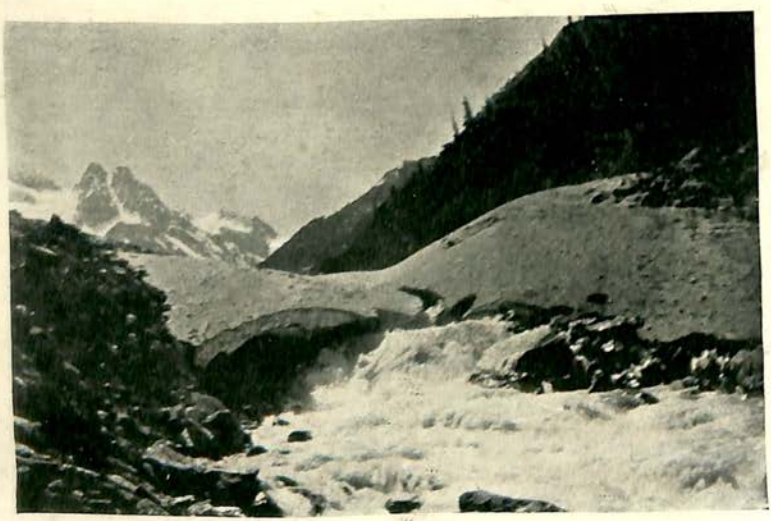
After bidding a cordial farewell to my friends of the day before, I got once more into the saddle, and proceeded towards Liddarwart. The scenery, though unlike that of the day before, was still very fine; we continued to follow the course of the stream, but now the path lay mostly over smooth grassy slopes which jutted down from the mountains; the ground was carpeted with flowers, many of them old English friends, some others new to me, and some old acquaintances with new faces, such as a tall deep blue forget-me-not, almost the colour of a gentian; a giant scabious, and the balsam familiar to London back gardens, but here not more than a foot high, and of a yellow colour. It was a steady ascent all day, and we drew ever nearer to the snow-level, in fact it was on this day that I beheld my first snow bridge, a thing which I had heard much of recently, but had not yet seen. It was formed by a huge drift of snow which

had fallen down into the valley in winter and become wedged in a narrow gorge; a torrent rushing down the gully had tunnelled under this and formed itself a way through the snow, which remained in the form of a firm and solid arch over the stream all through the summer, long after the surrounding snow had melted. This particular stream happened to be fordable lower down, so we left the snow bridge unused; but there are many remote places in Kashmir where the torrents are unbridged by man, and would be absolutely impassable did not Nature thoughtfully supply this means of traverse.

Liddarwart is a pretty spot, with about three huts, a wooden bridge made of three pine-stems laid side by side, and lovely wooded slopes reaching to the stream. As I was cantering over a grassy dell, rejoicing in the unusual smoothness of the ground, I dropped my riding-whip and asked a man who was sitting under a tree near by to pick it up for me; he did so, and then rather startled me by telling me that a man close by was ill and wished me to give him medicine. Now as cholera was a good deal about that year, and as I had incautiously made no inquiries before starting as to whether this part of the country was free from

it or not, I felt a slight twinge of uneasiness, but my knowledge of the language did not enable me clearly to understand the nature of the case. However, my fears were soon set aside by the sick man himself appearing and showing me a bad sore leg; unfortunately, I had ridden far in advance of my luggage, and had to explain that it was not in my power to give the man anything. Both men looked surprised, and asked if I were not then "hakim" (a doctor); on my replying "no" they let me pass without further talk, but I felt sorry that I had not been able to rise more satisfactorily to the occasion. A mile above Liddarwart we crossed the stream by a rickety bridge of a few planks bound together by twigs of birch; it swayed so much that I, the pony and the boy, had all to go over singly to avoid mishaps. This brought us to a green elevated camping-spot, where a smaller valley branched off from the main one. I made a feeble, but, needless to say, quite futile attempt, to camp a mile farther on, for I thought it would be easier for me next day when I went on to view the glacier; but as well might a Western traveller refuse the one inn a village offered him, as the traveller in Kashmir try to break through the custom in camping-grounds. "*All* sahibs camp here,"

VIEW FROM THE FOOT OF KOLOHOI



SNOW BRIDGE OVER TORRENT

Face p. 115

was the only argument the coolies would use as they quietly squatted down on the turf and began to unfasten their loads.

Here the camp rested the whole of the following day while I made an early morning start to view the glacier of Kolohoi. Kolohoi is a twin-peaked giant of a mountain measuring over 17,000 feet, who is never seen even in mid-summer without his snowy night-cap, and who lures travellers to the uttermost end of the Liddar Valley with the prospect of a near sight of the great glacier which comes sliding down his rugged side.

The start had to be made early, for at one place five streams have to be forded, which are easy enough in early morning when the sun is low; but in summer the hot afternoon sun rapidly melts the snow on the heights, and then the rivers rise and often become impassable. So my energetic servants packed me off at six o'clock in the morning with the pony, a full tiffin basket and two coolies to guide me, and then settled down to a lazy day of enjoyment in their own Eastern fashion. The ride was pretty throughout; at first through wooded slopes near to the rushing stream, where fallen pines often blocked the path and giant boulders

stood sentry by the way. We overtook many flocks of sheep, which were being driven up to the higher pastures; these animals had been entrusted by their owners in the valley to the care of a shepherd, who for the moderate sum of one and a half annas (three halfpence) a head, undertook to watch them for the three or four summer months up in the hills; if by any accident any of his charges died while in his care the shepherd was bound to produce the skin as a guarantee of good faith to the bereft owner. The most astonishing thing is, at the end of the season, to see an owner of three or four sheep go into a flock of several hundred and pick out his own animals without the least difficulty. The path in many places was so strewn with rocks that I had frequently to get off and allow the pony to go through gymnastic feats alone; he would step from one large rock to the other, cleverly avoiding the crevices, and come safely over places where an English horse would have broken his leg a dozen times. Only once did he jib at an obstacle, and that, oddly enough, was a very harmless pine-stem which lay across our path; there were no branches in the way, and I expected him to step across without any difficulty; but the little fellow suddenly made up his mind

that this was asking too much, he really *could not* do it. I used every art of persuasion, but he only put his nose down and sniffed, looked at either end to see if there were no other way round, and seemed sadly to shake his head at the impossibility of the task ; finding I remained obstinate and refused to dismount he gathered courage and, lifting his fore-legs simultaneously, landed them with a flop on the other side ; there he paused, but, finding nothing very alarming had happened, he dragged his hind-legs over singly and resumed the march. These tricks made him a very companionable little animal, more like a dog in his ways, and it was only when we reached the five rivers that I wished for the moment that I could have had a larger mount, for when he plunged about on the uneven bottom the rushing water came over the girths, and with all the splashing I grew very wet.

After crossing the five streams the character of the valley changed very markedly ; we emerged from the pine-trees and woodlands and saw nothing but green slopes around and above us. A great calmness seemed suddenly spread over everything, there was no more rustling of wind through the trees, no sound of man or beast, for we had left the last

flock far behind us, even the restless torrent stilled its roaring, and ran with a soft murmur over a smooth and narrowed bed. For many months I had heard no orchestra, and had been shut off from every kind of music, and yet no sooner had I emerged on to these green slopes than the swaying melodies of Mendelssohn's music came ringing in my ears; that overture entitled "Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage" seemed so perfectly to fit in with the blue sky, the green slopes, the snow-clad summits; after the struggle and stress of climbing came the wonderful calm and peace of the uplands.

We pressed up this valley for a mile or so, towards the point where the green slopes, swerving round into an amphitheatre, culminated in the twin-peaked mountain of Kolohoi. I looked eagerly at this giant as we approached his base, for I had never in my life seen a glacier, and was full of excitement to know what it would be like. Would it be an ordinary mass of snow, or would it be hard ice, and should I be able to stand on it and feel it crunch under my feet? I half dreaded disappointment, and feared to come upon it too suddenly. The mountain itself formed a fine jagged peak against the sky, though not looking here of any

exceptional height, for we must ourselves have been standing at an elevation of between thirteen and fourteen thousand feet, as far as I could judge without any instrument to assist calculation. The summit was a glistening mass of fresh snow; yellow, weather-worn snow choked up the ravines of the middle slopes, and rough loose boulders strewed the base of the ascent. When the grass gave out, and there were nothing but stones on the ground, I dismounted, and leaving the pony and tiffin basket behind proceeded on foot with the elder coolie. The boy was left with strict instructions to have a good fire burning and the kettle boiling against our return; and though it seemed to me that there was no fire-wood within miles, that did not prevent our orders from being of the exactest. It was very rough walking now, nothing but jagged rocks torn down from the mountain side, interspersed with streams of water from the snows. As the ascent grew steeper my skirt, though short enough, sadly impeded me, and I once or twice stumbled over it; at this the coolie called a halt and authoritatively bidding me undo my waist belt, settled the difficulty in such a drastic manner as would have rejoiced the heart of a member of the Rational Dress League; that is to say, he

kilted my skirt high up round my waist, and then passed the belt round to keep it there, so that I was about as much inconvenienced by it for the rest of the march as a Highlander would be in the shortest of national garments. Once or twice it occurred to me that it would perhaps have been just as sensible to discard the garment altogether, and leave it neatly rolled under a stone until our return; but I had a lingering feeling that in bearing it thus about me I was upholding the traditions of civilisation, and that I should have no cause to blush when I mixed once more with my fellow women; nevertheless, as I stepped out with freedom and comfort, I was more than once glad to reflect that I was the only member of the party capable of wielding a camera.

For some time I had noticed a sort of cave at the foot of the hill, from which a stream was flowing, and in this direction the coolie persistently headed me, though it appeared to me that the ascent was more precipitous there than a little farther on. It was an ordinary sort of cavern, grey-looking like the rest of the stone-covered ground; the flat surface which faced us I took to be smooth rock, and the aperture did not seem to penetrate far into the mountain. Not till we were close up to it did it flash upon

me that this was *it*, the glacier, which, spreading in one vast sheet over the mountain side, here terminated abruptly. Disappointment was the first sensation, for it was difficult to realise that under these loose grey stones was a solid block of ice, perhaps half a mile broad and of unknown depth, but as we came up to the mouth of the cave, this feeling vanished; here was clear hard ice, solid enough to satisfy any wants, and after a spirited dash over the threshold to avoid the continually falling shower of stones and water from the hill-side above, we stood in an ice palace which would have served admirably for the *mise-en-scène* of a fairy tale. Clear, green and cold were the walls of this enchanted abode, and the large cracks and projecting blocks only served to throw up its beauties more vividly. True it was only a short distance inwards that we were able to penetrate, for the vaulting soon came down too low to allow our going, save in a very bent attitude; and so much ice pressing close all round made it a cold sojourning place; therefore after a good look round we made another dash past the opening and then set ourselves seriously to breast the exterior of the glacier. There were no mountain feats to be performed here, it was merely very steep and slippery

under foot, for the loose stones lying on the ice, which was now beginning to melt in the sun, gave way at the slightest touch, so that one's foothold was perpetually slipping away. After half an hour of this the stones ceased, and we came to the border of the perpetual snows; snow lay all around and stretched away to the summit of the mountain. My guide advised going no further, and it would certainly have been foolish to attempt anything more; it was impossible for me in any case to reach the summit, and to cast oneself haphazard on the snow without any exact knowledge of the ground, would have been extremely dangerous, neither the coolie or I having any science in mountain-climbing. So we rested content with our achievement, turned and admired the view in all its aspects, gathered great stones and dropped them down the long ice cracks which rent the glacier in every direction, and listened eagerly for the long-deferred reverberation which came up from the depths as our missiles sunk to rest. I hardly know whether the coolie or myself showed the greatest zest in this simple form of amusement, which, however childish it may sound in description, was certainly very fascinating; we had difficulty in dragging ourselves from it, and only the fear of getting seriously

belated, and finding the five streams impassable, made us at last desist from our enjoyment, and turn our faces resolutely camp-ward. The clever boy had the kettle boiling when we rejoined him, and after a hasty lunch and cup of tea we started on the return journey ; luckily the day had become overcast, a slight shower came on, and though the waters of the rivers had risen a little they offered no serious obstacle to our passage. By five o'clock we had regained the camp, where I was almost knocked over by the reproachful Jones for having left him the whole long day alone.

CHAPTER X

TAR SAR

My servants had a distressing habit of early rising, which no hints from me of its unacceptableness were powerful to check. The morning after my unwonted climbing I was a mass of stiffness, and would have been peculiarly vulnerable to the allurement of breakfast in bed, had it been offered me, instead of which, punctually at a quarter to six, the ominous sound of splashing water and the fateful words "Ghusl taiar" (bath ready) greeted my ears. The bath-room in a tent is merely a semicircular flap projecting on to one of the outer sides; it is usually of rather thinner canvas than the rest, and is only joined to it loosely; so as regards the protection it afforded me from the keen morning blast, I might as well have been taking my morning tub under the blue vault of heaven. Indeed, I often speculated over the interesting problem whether one all-embracing blast would

not have been less painful to bear than the concentrated vicious breezes which bore upon me through half a dozen chinks; but of course a comparative test of both methods was necessarily beyond the possibility of experiment.

Emerging from my tent after this heroic beginning, I found the breakfast-table spread in the open air, looking rather like a strayed orphan, with never a rock or tree to nestle to. However hastily I might try to eat, the things were stone cold long before I had finished; for though the sun was already up, the steep line of hills opposite kept our valley in shade, and Kolohoi was sending blast upon blast off his snowy sides to us for a morning greeting. No one was disposed to linger on such a morning, even the "graceless ruffians" (as I had long since mentally dubbed my coolies) set to, with unaccustomed alacrity, taking down the tents and making up their loads with less grumbling than usual. I felt always like a burlesque representation of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning on such occasions; for while I eat my toast and sipped my tea, the furniture would be carried off in pieces, tents lie prone on the ground in shapeless heaps, and what had been an orderly camp the night before was now only a scene of untidy disorder.

The march this day was to be short, hardly more than six miles, to a place at the parting of the valleys known as Sekwas. This would bring us to an advantageous position for finding out if the pass to Sonamerg was open; if it were, I would then be fresh for an early start next day over the snows; but should it not be so, I could from this place branch off to Tar Sar and the Nagberan Valley. We left the Liddar at right angles, and followed a valley of green slopes over a somewhat rough path. The day was uneventful until the time came to cross the torrent, and then a shepherd came to warn us that the bridge had been recently swept away. After some discussion which I was unable to understand, it was decided that my pony was to turn back for a mile or two and avail himself of a snow bridge which spanned the river lower down, but that I and the coolies could cross by a temporary foot-bridge which lay farther up. When I reached this structure I was tempted to wish that I had turned back with the pony, for it consisted only of two roughly hewn pine-stems thrown from bank to bank. They lay about a foot apart from each other, and there had been no attempt made at smoothing them or making them fast, and I noticed with inward trepidation that they danced

considerably as the first coolie stepped over them. While I hesitated as to whether I could venture crossing alone, the servants came up, and seeing by their faces that they felt much as I did in the matter, I realised that it would not do to show the white feather lest the panic should spread, so with a pretence of not caring, but with my heart in my mouth, I went over next, placing a foot on either tree, which necessitated a waddling method of progression, which must have appeared very funny to the onlookers. Halfway over I heartily wished I had never started, but by keeping my eyes well fixed on the bank and away from the white torrent below, I got over safely; then stood and watched the others do the same. The cook, a young down-country boy, took off his shoes and came over with much visible fear, being freely chaffed by the coolies the while. The bearer, though disliking it, showed more pluck; the sweeper followed jauntily, for he was a man of much nerve; and as for the coolies, though weighted down by their heavy loads, they were so much used to this sort of thing that they hardly seemed to notice that it was not solid ground, and must have wondered what we were making such a to-do about. Last of all came poor Jones, and it took the united

encouragement of the whole party to get him to start, and it was only the dread of being left behind on the further shore which spurred him to the attempt. First he tried walking on both trees, but the width was too wide for his legs, and he transferred himself to one only; that, however, was too narrow, so after much convulsive digging in of claws, and by almost lying flat down on his stomach, he divided himself again between the two; half way over he had such a bad attack of nerves that he could neither advance nor retrace his steps, and though we longed to encourage him, his poor old face showed such a ludicrous picture of misery that we all shook with laughter. Finally he made a desperate bolt for it, and landed amidst a chorus of congratulations, which he was far too upset to receive with his usual good-humoured wag of the tail.

At one o'clock we reached the camping-ground, which was an open space where two valleys met. There were a few disused huts on the hill-side such as the goatherds use in the summer, but so little of a "place" was it that one wondered how it came to have a name. I came in ahead of my luggage, and awaited it under a clump of silver birches which here thinly covered the hill. After a while two Gujar

women, one with a babe at her breast, came up, and sitting down on the ground in front of me, tried to engage in friendly talk. They were quiet women, with kindly, intelligent faces, and I was sorry we had so few words in common wherewith to understand each other. With hospitable thought for the wayfarer, one of them produced a round scone from the folds of her garments and offered it for my acceptance. Like every native woman I met in Kashmir, they embarrassed me with questions as to where my "sahib" was, it being beyond the comprehension of these good souls that a woman might be travelling without an attendant male. I ought, I suppose, to have embraced the opportunity of enlightening their minds about the emancipation of women, and lectured them about the freedom and superiority of European methods, but there was never any one, I fear, less endowed with the missionary instinct; no sooner do I find myself in a strange land or company than I seem instinctively to identify myself with the feelings and opinions held there, and lack the moral courage to do anything in violence to them. So, as often as not, when I met a Kashmir woman on the road, and she asked me "where was the sahib?" instead of replying

boldly that there was *no* sahib, if the interview promised to be a short one, I would take refuge in a paltry little lie, and vaguely waving up the valley, reply, "Sahib coming," not much caring if a few minutes later a chat with the servants following would reveal the untruth to her, so long as I got by in peace.

We placed the camp on flat ground at the bottom of the valley, so as to be near water; it was a bare, exposed place, open to the wind on every side, and hardly were the tents up than the rain settled down heavily, and thick clouds rolling up covered the tops of the mountains. The trench round the tent was deepened to ensure the water running away; the tent pegs were each driven in more firmly, and then with books and needle-work, a warm charcoal brazier and a comfortable easy chair, I settled down for a cosy wet afternoon. When tea arrived at four o'clock with cakes and hot scones from the clever little cook, there was nothing wanting save a pleasant companion on the other side of the brazier to make one feel as comfortably domesticated as by the snuggest of hearths in England; it is wonderful what a civilising influence tea and needle-work (especially if the latter happens

to be stocking-mending) will have on the wildest surroundings.

The bearer was absent for several hours inquiring from some distant shepherds about the Sonamarg route, and came back with the report that it was quite impassable, and that we must therefore make for Srinagar by the Tar Sar Lake. The inclement weather made me accept this verdict the more readily, for what was rain with us would certainly be snow on those more elevated heights, and I had neither inclination nor nerve for any foolhardy feats, besides the impossibility of inducing the "graceless ruffians" to undertake the risk. Though the march was to be long and steep next day, we were unable to start early as the tents were still wet, and needed an hour or two of sunshine to dry them. When we did start the path lay up a fair green valley devoid of trees on either hill; it was a bad road to travel, and I had to walk a great deal. At regular intervals from the summit of the hills a great tumbled mass of loose boulders spread down in fan-like shape to the valley; it was as if giants above had been emptying down cart-loads of these rocks for their own amusement. However rough and inconvenient they might be these great boulders had to be crossed, and it was not a

question of following the path so much as for each member to find for himself what stones he could skip to easiest. It was wearisome work leading and encouraging the pony over these, for he necessarily went slower than we did, and one such mass would often extend for over a quarter of a mile; then there would be a brief space on the turfy path again, where I was able to ride; then once more stones and rocks; and so it continued the whole way up the valley. Often there was a loud sound of rushing water under the stones, and we knew that some mountain torrent was coursing its way down underneath; but so densely packed together was the overlying mass of rock that we were never able to see it. Here and there in a fit of playfulness Nature had prepared a logan-stone for the unwary, and more than once when I jumped down on a rock of immense size and apparently equal to any weight, the thing would rock dangerously under me, and I found it was so delicately poised as to answer to the slightest touch; added to the actual inconvenience it caused, there was always a feeling of moral shock to find anything so large could be so deceitful.

At the top of the valley the snow was lying in patches on the ground, the path was barely traceable and at best was

no more than a faint sheep-track wandering here and there over the grass; brilliant pink alpine flowers studded the ground and seemed eager to make the most of their short summer. I never saw a prettier sight in its way than when accidentally I kicked a piece of snow from the ground, and exposed underneath one of these little flowers, quite pale for want of light but perfect in size and form, and only waiting for the full summer sun to clothe it in its brilliant rosy hue, when it would be able to fulfil its functions in life of attracting insects, setting its seed and propagating its species, which is rightly the one aim and ambition of every well constituted little floweret.

We pressed on over slushy wet ground to where at the head of the valley the encircling hills held the little lake of Tar Sar in their arms. I had never seen a mountain lake before, which was perhaps one reason why this one struck me as so peculiarly beautiful, also it was an ideal day for seeing everything to advantage. The waters of Tar Sar, which nestled close up to the foot of the mountains, were as blue as the clear sky above, save where a thin sheet of ice at the farther end still held a layer of snow upon the surface. The lake was about a mile long and only half as broad; on

the left bank the hill rose up steep as a wall and was a dense mass of piled snow from brink to summit; on the right the slope was more gradual, and getting the full rays of the sun the snow had here disappeared. The most perfect peace reigned everywhere, not a ripple disturbed the water, the rushing of the far off stream ceased to be audible, bright sunshine bathed the whole scene, and the hum of innumerable insects filled the air; save for this droning sound and the occasional bleating of a solitary goat some way off on the hill, the silence was almost audible. The clear blue of the sky was but lightly disturbed by a few fleecy white clouds which drifted lazily by and were faithfully reflected in the blue waters of the lake.

Our path, which was barely visible, lay along the right bank where the more gradual slope of the hills made walking possible though by no means easy, for the same rough boulders we had met before strewed the way. I had difficulty in keeping my eyes on the path, for the attraction of looking at the lake was so much greater, the result being that I frequently stumbled; every time I came to grief my attending coolie, who was a particularly ugly but rather kindly old man, would call back to me, "Hosh,

hosh, khabardar, shabash"; and give long encouraging whistles and a curious click of the tongue, the same as he next moment addressed to the pony he was leading. Where the mountains at the head of the lake closed round in a semicircle, there was a slight dip in the sky-line, and it was there that the pass lay, all covered with snow, over which we had to work our way. The climb now began in earnest, for we had to leave the rocky land and zigzag up a steep stretch of untrodden snow which the summer sun had softened so that it gave way at each footstep. It was tiring work sinking up to the knees at every stride, and often up to the waist; the snow came in over my boot tops and made me wringing wet; but getting wet through and dry again half a dozen times seems all in the day's work in Kashmir, and I never found it cause the slightest harm.

It was a very funny sight to see Jones ploughing his way up hill; his coat looked such a dirty white against the fresh snow that he had a more disreputable Bill Sykes look than usual; he would flounder on for a few paces until he had sunk nearly to his chin in the soft snow, when he would pause with a look of dismay on his poor old face, wondering how much farther he was going; then, despairing of being

able to walk properly on the surface of this curious stuff, he would make futile attempts to swim through it; he was a down-country dog, and had seldom, if ever, met snow before, and to the end of our trip he never quite grasped the best method of dealing with this new medium.

The point for which we were aiming at the summit of the pass seemed to end in a straight wall of snow about twenty feet high; it rose up stiff and inaccessible as an English garden-wall, and I kept wondering, as I toiled up hot and panting towards it, if it were really as straight as it looked, and how we would ever surmount it. It was quite perpendicular, as I found when we stood at the base, but nevertheless it presented no serious difficulty, for the snow with a little persuasion formed itself readily into steps, up which the coolie climbed first, and then succeeded in hauling not only me but also the pony after him, it being apparently an axiom in Kashmir that wherever a man can go, a pony can go too, unless he be a pack animal, when the load, being only loosely secured to his back, would be liable to slip off in steep places, or by hitting a projecting rock might throw him over.

Once on the top of the ridge (which was nearly as thin as a knife-board and fell away abruptly on the other side) I

was able to turn round and enjoy thoroughly the view we were leaving and to which I had been forced to turn my back all the time while climbing. As we had risen so the mountains on the opposite side of the lake seemed also to have risen in height, and now formed a bold mass with many deep snow-filled hollows; Tar Sar lay at our feet, more blue and peaceful than ever; and far away, in the direction from whence we had come, were to be seen range upon range of snowy peaks which the nearer hills had hitherto shut out from view. The new valley in front of us was green and park-like in character compared to the one we were leaving; but it had less attraction for me than the latter, so I rested long and gazed my fill at the lake and all its surrounding loveliness, for it was doubtful if I was ever likely to see it again. Far below, in straggling single file, came the "graceless ruffians," just preparing for the ascent we had accomplished, and I was amused to hear how cheerfully they laughed and sang under their heavy burdens when I was no longer near to make it perhaps profitable to sham fatigue; bandying jokes from one end of the line to the other, and making the still air ring with their laughter.

At last soft woolly clouds came drifting up from the

neighbouring valley and, toppling gently over the mountains, prepared to settle down upon the lake; they warned me that the fineness of the day might break, and that it would be wise to get down from the heights before the mist enveloped us. Regretfully I turned my back on Tar Sar, longing some day to see it again; and now followed an endless and very wearisome descent into the next valley, which was made more difficult by the looseness of the stones on the hill-side, so that I very nearly sprained my ankle and had at least one bad tumble before reaching the bottom. When we reached comparatively level ground I was able to ride a little, but here again the frequently recurring moraines of stones necessitated constant dismounting; it was a tiring march for several miles down the valley before the camping-ground was reached. Once there was a ford to cross which my escort unanimously declared too swift and deep for the pony to bear me through; I waited patiently while the problem was under discussion, and was told finally that I was to make the transit on the bearer's back. With a good deal of inward trepidation and a sad lack of outward gracefulness on my part this programme was carried out; but, when nearly sticking in mid-stream, I wondered how, in my childhood, I had ever looked upon pick-a-back as a pleasant

pastime : man is too top-heavy and wobbly an animal ever to make an agreeable mount.

We camped on a green slope with pine-trees near us ; having been for two days out of their altitude it was pleasant to be near their dark shadows again. As I sat at the tent-door, thoroughly enjoying a cup of tea after the hard day, three sad women came up the hill and squatted down in front of me, asking for medicine. One said she had weak eyes, another had a sharp pain in her chest, and the third was generally "wrong inside." I felt heartless in being unable to relieve them, but the fact was that I was completely cut off from the few medicines I had with me, through having a few days previously lost my keys and being totally unable to open my boxes. The bearer had refused to let me burst them open, as I held duplicate keys in Srinagar and had decreed a course of dirty linen and general untidiness until we came to the end of the journey. (I must say in passing that it was something of a shock to find how very readily the mind adapted itself to this state of want of clean linen—I was dirty to-day, and would be dirtier still to-morrow—well ! what matter ? I would be clean again by the end of the week. This is the way, I suppose, with soldiers on the march.)

It was a sad little tea-party out there on the green hill while the sun was setting ; I sat and sipped the tea while my visitors, squatting on the ground, made little whispering comments to each other on every article inside the tent; I felt so inhospitable that I asked the bearer to give them half a pound of tea and backsheesh, but he smiled and shook his head and said they only wanted medicine ; as this was the one thing I could not produce I heartily wished they would leave, and this they did after half an hour, salaaming deeply as when they came, and going silently down the hill again.

So keenly did I feel my helplessness in being unable to supply both these and other good folk with medicine in the way they expected that I determined in future to be prepared for all emergencies, and on returning to civilisation inquired of many people learned in such matters what was the best all-round panacea to carry for these occasions ; by common consent castor oil was voted the one safe remedy for every illness, but so vivid were my recollections of the pangs endured in childhood while having to swallow that sticky fluid that in the end I could never bring myself to include a bottle of it in my travelling gear ; thus my philanthropic intentions never crystallised into action.

CHAPTER XI

BACK TO SRINAGAR

NEXT morning brought a stiff but short climb over a lofty ridge which commanded a magnificent view of the whole Kashmir Valley. As we gained this height the morning mist was just rolling away, and we could see the broad Jhelum glinting in the sun; beyond, on the far horizon, so faint as to be hardly visible in the haze, was the dim outline of the snowy Pir Panjal range. A fair valley lay at our feet flanked by undulating wooded hills; lower down were signs of cultivation, a sight we had long been strangers to among the higher ranges.

At this point I was called upon by the servants to decide which path we should take, for the "graceless ones" suddenly declared themselves quite at sea in this neighbourhood, and unable to guide us the best way to Srinagar. The map in my guide-book was too small to be of use, so I had, by a look at the points of the compass, and reference

to the general appearance of the land, to determine what course was best—no light responsibility for a born and bred Cockney, where a wrong choice at the outset meant at least a whole day's extra marching; but I believe my selection was a good one, and that we achieved the shortest distance with the minimum of climbing.

The steepest of down-hill paths awaited us on descending from this ridge; for two hours we corkscrewed down the mountain side, which was so precipitous that the pony's saddle constantly worked over his neck with only its own weight, and I regretted for the hundredth time on my wanderings that the saddle had not been fitted with a tail strap at starting. The sun scorched down upon us, and the air grew hotter at every step of the descent, but we continued without a halt, hoping to reach the bottom the sooner and finish with this knee-breaking motion. Half-way down a little stream crossed the path, and at this sight, by one common instinct, we all flung ourselves down on the margin to drink, pony, man and dog, regardless of rank and appearance, lapping up greedily, Jones, as usual, in his eagerness showing some want of tact by sprawling, stomach downwards, in the upper reaches, and so polluting the water for our use.

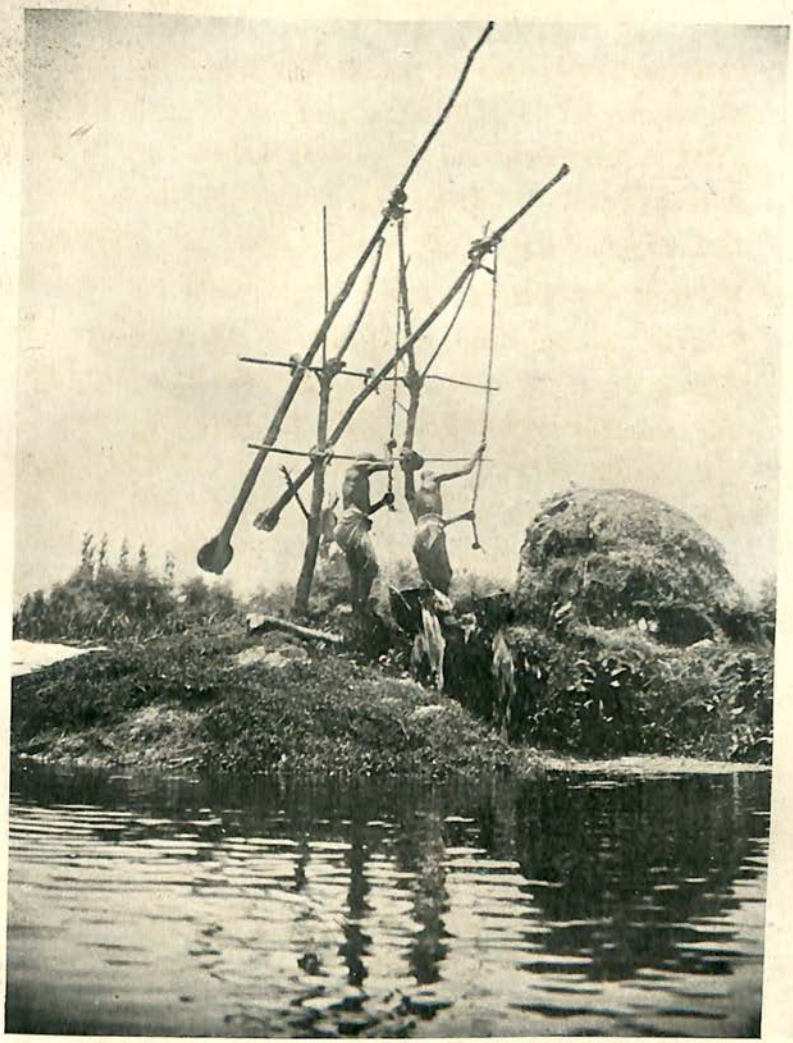
Back to Srinagar

A long day's march brought us once more to the land of rice and cultivation, to snug villages and walnut-trees, to rows of waving willows by running streams; also, alas! to a land of heat and mosquitoes. We were to have camped at Sootoor, but the ground looked to me so unutterably insanitary in the middle of a dirty village that I refused to rest there, and we pushed on for about three miles to a more cleanly-looking little spot, where every inch of ground was not suggestive of cholera and typhoid germs. That night we dismissed the "graceless ruffians," who, true to their characters to the end, departed in a storm of protests and grumblings because they had received all, and rather more, than they had stipulated for, each man coming to the tent and explaining to me why he individually should receive more than his neighbours. We engaged a fresh set of coolies overnight who were to take us the double march in one day to Srinagar, and next morning at five we broke up camp, hoping in this way to avoid the mid-day heat, but long before nine o'clock the sun was grilling us with a fierce heat, and there was little shelter to be had all the way.

My pet pony had gone back home with the "graceless ones," and in his place they brought me a narrow-chested

little mare, who presented herself with her little colt following close at her heels. She had a motherly little heart, and as often as the young one (who went with us all the way) lagged behind, she would give a soft whinny which brought him galloping to her side again. The only drawback I found to the company of this idyllic little pair was the frequent pauses which the youth of the colt seemed to demand for refreshment; it was a hot and no doubt thirsty day, and his careful mother evidently thought it better for him to take constant nourishment on the march. In the solitudes of the country these domestic interludes caused me no embarrassment, but as we neared Srinagar the prospect of one such taking place under the eyes of many assembled Europeans was more than I could contemplate (for there was no telling at what inconvenient moment the next craving for food would seize the little fellow, and it was just as likely to be in full view of the club house or polo ground); so when we reached the borders of civilisation, on a flimsy pretext of taking a short cut, I sent the coolie and mare by road to the camping-ground, and went off alone on foot by the river embankment.

Never, I think, did I endure a hotter ride than those



IRRIGATION WELL

Face p. 144

last eleven or twelve miles into Srinagar along the level plain of the valley. When I had left for Pahlgam in June the land was covered by green crops, and was fresh and soothing to the eye; now in July these crops had all been gathered in, the ground was baked into cracks under the scorching sun and sent up a shimmering glare of heat. One yearned for shade, even of the most temporary nature; but the main road seemed, on the whole, to avoid the villages, which, with their clumps of walnut-, mulberry- and pear-trees, would have given a welcome shelter. Once, indeed, we passed through a grove of apricots just as the crop was being gathered, and laps-full of the yellow fruit could have been had for a farthing. These small apricots are extensively dried and sent up to Ladakh, where they form a great staple of food in that country almost devoid of vegetation.

Through one especially hot tract of country the road lay extended for over two miles without even a particle of shade. Despite my white-covered umbrella and pith hat, the heat was almost more than I could bear, and I would have gladly crept for momentary rest under any over-hanging rock or anywhere to get my head for a little while in shelter. At last, half a mile ahead on the path I saw a

chenar-tree, bushy, and with far-reaching branches which spread a grateful circle of shade at its feet. We pressed on eagerly, and from the distance I descried a curious figure lying underneath, which puzzled me at first, until coming closer I could see it was a coolie who was travelling in charge of a basket of provisions, and lest these should be stolen from him by a passing thief while he snatched a moment's rest, he had twined his legs through and round the basket handle, and so held it safely encircled while he slept. He looked so enticingly comfortable lying there that I felt one could not do better than follow his example, and as it was neither the time nor place to show snobbishness I slipped from my saddle, selected the most comfortable place I could find, using the sloping wayside bank for a pillow, and settled on one side of the sleeper, while the coolie, actuated by a similar impulse, settled himself on the other; Jones lay in the dust, a grinning gargoyle dropping running beads from his tongue; and the mare and colt stood at ease in the background, and gave themselves over to their favourite pastime of feeding and being fed. In one minute we were most of us asleep, and must have presented a curious spectacle to the casual passer-by. Unfortunately, conscience

HOUSE ON A CANAL

WOMEN WASHING BY THE BANK

Face p. 146

woke me at the end of half an hour, and seeing the imprudence of delaying the journey when the heat was every moment growing more unbearable, I reluctantly called the others, and we got on our way again.

This was not by any means the only chenar-tree of whose shade we gratefully availed ourselves during that day; as we neared the capital we came more frequently across these giant sentinels by the way-side, several hundreds of years old they are said to be, and it was the thoughtfulness of the Moghul Emperors which in the first place set them there. Standing thus a little way back from the road, the ground under them raised to a smooth platform, they take the place of wayside inns at home, and the weary traveller pulls up with his horses or cattle and takes his rest and refreshment under their shade, with much less harm to himself than can be said to be the case of an English carter at a public-house. The spread of their branches is so immense that there is room for more than one set of travellers and their animals at a time, and though I often shared the platform with native bullock drivers it always seemed possible to get privacy and seclusion in some portion of this generous shade.

It was two o'clock ere we reached Srinagar, and knowing

my tents to be far behind I went to the house of a lady doctor of my acquaintance and was by her and her sister most hospitably received. It was pleasant to get under a solid roof again out of the heat, to enjoy the luxury of clean raiment and the unwonted feeling of being able to move about freely indoors, and the possibility of leaning up against a wall without endangering the stability of the whole edifice; pleasant too to let one's tongue run on in English after six days' wrestling with an unfamiliar language. Though my tents after a time stood ready for me on the camping-ground my friends would not allow me to go and occupy them, but insisted on my staying with them, and I was only too willing to be persuaded; the house stood on the "bund" overlooking the river, a long low wooden balcony overhung the footpath; tall trees shaded the garden, where English flowers and vegetables grew with tropical luxuriance; though outside was all glare and heat, indoors was always kept cool and shady; towards night the full moon shone out and flooded the garden like day; I lay in bed with open casement and watched the broad chenar-leaves glistening in the light; then I dropped off to sleep, thinking of Tar Sar in its loneliness and wondering how it looked in the moonlight.

Face p. 148

A SWEET SHOP

CHAPTER XII

GULMARG

It is too hot down in the Kashmir Valley in July and August for any one to stay there unless imperatively kept by business; my only desire was to get fresh clothes from my boxes and make arrangements for transporting myself and belongings up to Gulmarg as quickly as possible. Gulmarg is the summer resort of the English officials in Kashmir, and is healthfully situated in the Pir Panjal range at an elevation of about 8500 feet, and a distance of nearly thirty miles by road from Srinagar. There is a good cart road for twenty-five miles to the foot of the hill, and the distance can be either ridden or driven; I preferred the former, and hired for the purpose from a native livery stable a gaunt white horse with English saddle and bridle for the modest sum of one rupee per day; the services of a man were thrown in for this price, and it also included the feed of both man and horse.

It was six o'clock in the evening before I was able to face the heat, and then I set off with only Jones for an escort, for the servants had gone some hours before with the "ekkas" and luggage. After crossing the first bridge and going through a short piece of the town, the road for the first eight miles lay along the broad Baramulla road, which for the entire thirty miles of its length is bordered by an avenue of poplars, so closely set together that cattle can hardly pass between their stems; they furnish excellent shade, and there is a certain attractiveness in their undeviating monotony. Perhaps no one rode those first few miles in a state of more absolute funk than I did, for I must again repeat that I am a born coward on a horse, and this new mount was so large in comparison to the hill ponies I had been riding that I was in terror lest he should bolt or shy, or kick and throw me to the ground; the "syce" (groom) was far ahead waiting for us at the rest-house, and I was filled with compassion when I reflected that it would be left to a passing native to pick up my crumpled remains. Not till we had passed the fourth mile-stone did it slowly dawn upon me that I was seated on the quietest of old Government casters, who was as likely to shy or turn skittish as an omnibus horse of twenty years'

standing ; when I had at length made this pleasing discovery I was able to look about and enjoy myself. Jones proved a sad laggard on this ride, the paces of my new animal were far too quick for him, and he flatly refused to try to keep up with me. As often as I turned round I saw a reproachful bull-dog face following in the dust some hundred yards behind, and in the heat I had not the heart to hurry the poor old dog too much ; it was well on into dusk therefore when somewhere near the eighth mile-stone we turned off the Baramulla road, and took one to the left over the plains, which leads through the village of Margan, straight to the foot of the hills. There were seven miles of this road for me to do that night before reaching Margan, and I was not sorry when they were over, for they were lonely riding in the gloaming ; no other travellers seemed abroad, the open fields on either side stretched away indefinitely and seemed void of life ; through the two or three villages we passed the inhabitants were all sound asleep save the large, savage dogs who gathered angrily to bark at our passage, and thankful I was every time we came through in safety, for I feared lest Jones would be set upon in the darkness. It was nearly nine o'clock, and so pitch dark that I could hardly

distinguish the rest-house when we reached Margan ; the servants at the bungalow had all gone to rest, and I had some difficulty in rousing them to come and take my horse and prepare me some dinner, which meal I eventually got and enjoyed, in happy unconsciousness that there was cholera all round the neighbourhood, and that it would have been wiser not to taste any food there.

Next day's ride was a sore trial in the literal sense of the word ; my big rough-actioned horse had shaken me severely, I ached in every muscle, and was sore wherever I met the saddle, and until then I had never realised how many points of contact there were between myself and the saddle. To sit was agony, to grasp the pommel with my knees nearly impossible ; I could not bear the pain of trotting for more than a few minutes ; and cantering, which would have been one degree more bearable, seemed the one action with which my otherwise amiable animal refused to oblige me. For ten miles under a scorching sun, with very uninteresting scenery, this painful ride lasted, until we reached the foot of the hills and began the two and a half miles of steep ascent up the bridle path, through cool pines and forest, to Gulmarg.

Gulmarg

"Marg" means a meadow, and "Gulmarg" means "the meadow of flowers"; other mountain meadows similar to Gulmarg are scattered plentifully over Kashmir and form a distinctive feature of the hills there. After climbing for hours up a steep pine-clad hill the traveller, to his surprise and delight, finds himself on a lovely undulating grass plateau, often a mile or two in extent, encircled by pine trees, where goats and buffaloes will be found grazing as securely as in the snuggest of valleys. The mountain often goes towering up for several thousand feet higher, and perhaps has one or two more such delightfully unexpected halting-places to offer the climber who has faith in his goodness; it is as if a giant, taking kindly compassion on a weakling, suddenly offered him a soft cradle of repose in his mighty arms.

An hour's toiling up the woodland path brought us to the entrance of Gulmarg, for one enters quite suddenly through a narrow cutting with high banks on either side; on the right stands the Residency, on the left the doctor's house, both with an unsurpassed view over the valley below; other smaller English bungalows are to be seen dotted about, and there is an unpretentious native bazaar in the fore-

ground; straight in front, lying slightly in a hollow, are the grassy plains of Gulmarg, bearing many signs of civilisation on their two or more miles of undulating greenness. Most conspicuous is the Maharaja's palace, bare and ugly as a barrack; opposite to it, on a knoll on the left, stands the little English church; eager golf-players in twos and fours can be seen following the winding course of the links from green to green; a polo-ground, club-house, tennis and badminton courts, occupy a central position accessible to all; farther on the rambling buildings of the hotel stand on a spur of land all to themselves; all round are roughly built little wooden houses, barely more than huts, which is the name they generally go by, but which yet command a very fancy price during the season; while for people of more humble demands every well-drained piece of ground with a sheltering clump of trees offers facilities for camping. Drainage is the great trouble of the place, for Gulmarg is very like a saucer, high round the edges and depressed in the middle, so that after a spell of rain (and it *can* rain there, longer and harder than in most places) it is no uncommon sight to see the polo-field and neighbouring ground under a foot of water, and then long and deep are the imprecations

of men who have at some expense brought ponies up from the plains with the express intention of playing three times a week.

It was the custom in Kashmir among people who did not intend going to Gulmarg to speak of it as a fashionable and expensive hill-station, where smartness and good dressing were *de rigueur* and poorer brethren looked down upon; I found it, on the contrary, a pleasant, sociable little place, where one quickly knew everybody and where every one came bent upon getting the most enjoyment out of their short stay. It is true by common consent most people put on their best when going to the polo-stand or gathering to watch the finals at the golf tournament; but there was no hard and fast rule as to the age or fashion that "best" was to be; toilettes of three years' standing mixed in friendly social equality with confections straight out from home. If a pretty girl had a becoming English hat to wear, she wore it; but if not, she looked just as pretty in the broad-brimmed "puttoo" hat, made from the homespun in the bazaars of Srinagar, and no one thought the worse of her for it. We all drifted sooner or later into "puttoo" clothes, as our European gear gave out, and it was a perpetual

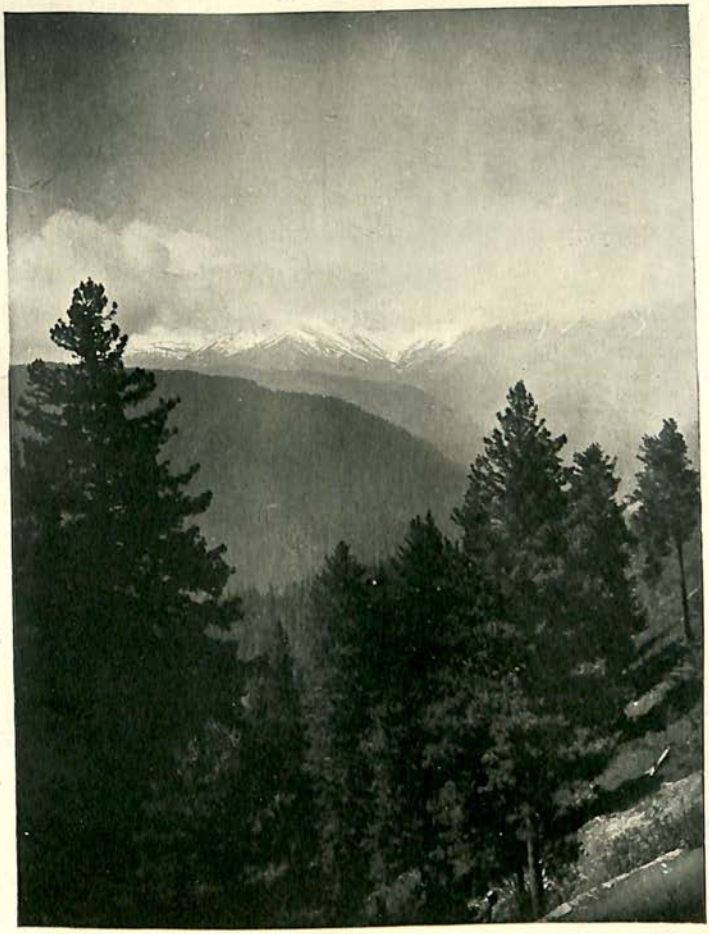
interest to discuss which native tailor you had tried and who had cheated you most. When the silk of my only sunshade one day burst into ribbons, and I explained to an inquiring circle of ladies at the club how I had had it replaced by Turkey-red cloth surmounted by a white umbrella cover, all for less than a rupee, the general verdict was that I had come with sense and economy out of a trying situation. We were none of us very anxious to outshine the others, but all most eager to assist any one in beating the native merchant down to his very bottom-most price.

The society was mostly military and that of men from outlying frontier districts who were cut off from society a great part of the year, and came to Gulmarg with the laudable design of getting the maximum of fun and enjoyment out of their few weeks' leave; so polo, golf and dancing flourished exceedingly, and there was never a dearth of men for a picnic up the mountain to Killanmarg. Every one kept riding-horses, for in a place where carriages were unknown, and only the more rich or elderly used "dandies," they were indispensable to one's existence. I myself soon changed my old white Rosinante for a more sleek-looking lady's hack, and fell into the way of the rest of the world in using

him on every occasion. A canter before breakfast round the racecourse or over the outlying meadows while the dew lay on the ground and the air was fresh would begin the day; then, if morning calls had to be made, the same faithful animal would be round at eleven and bear his rider (dressed in frills and muslins) at a sedate walk lest a faster pace might play havoc with the millinery, while the syce followed behind in charge of the sunshade and card-case; at six o'clock both horse and syce would be among the gossiping motley throng awaiting their masters outside the club-house, ready to take them the short distance home in the gathering twilight, barely in time to dress for dinner and the dance afterwards at the hotel. Going out to dinner was a far more picturesque performance at Gulmarg than it is in London; a "dandy" (or carrying-chair) was then a necessity for a lady; four natives would bear the pole, which projects back and front, on their shoulders, while a fifth carried a lighted torch, consisting generally of some very resinous piece of pine-wood; this was as much to scare away evil spirits as to give light, for natives are very timorous in the dark. The fitful glare of the torch, the curious rhythmical grunt of the natives as they picked their way bare-footed down the path,

the dazzling galaxy of stars overhead, the mysterious look of the "marg" at night-time given up to solitude and a few grazing cattle who loomed up unexpectedly as we approached and vanished again in the gloom; the will-o'-the-wisp twinkle of other torches guiding similar revellers to their tryst, all disposed the mind for something unexpected and romantic; and there was always a slight shock of surprise when this preface ended in a pretty drawing-room with softly-shaded lamps, ladies and gentlemen in immaculate evening dress, French menu cards on the table and a dinner served up as it would be in Mayfair.

But, to take things in their proper sequence, it was not till latterly that I was able to enjoy the social side of Gulmarg, the first weeks were spoilt to me by the robbery of my jewellery, and all the worry and discomfort that event caused me.



VIEW FROM THE CIRCULAR ROAD AT GULMARG

Face p. 158

CHAPTER XIII

TRIAL BY TEAPOT

When I was bringing up my tents to Gulmarg some acquaintances I had made in Srinagar invited me to pitch my camp close to their hut, which lay at the farthest extremity of the "marg," and this I did, glad of the society and protection it seemed to promise. But the same fatality which had persistently dogged my steps in Kashmir, throwing me so much on my own resources, pursued me here, for the shadow of Death lay over that house the whole summer, and in these sad circumstances all thought of close intercourse seemed like an intrusion.

I had been just a week in Gulmarg, and was having one morning a rough-and-tumble game with Jones at six o'clock preparatory to getting up; Jones, it might be mentioned in passing, had a mistaken idea, that when the night had been rather cold he had a right to invade my bed in the early

morning ; now this was a claim I had never admitted, a camp bed being inconveniently small for even one, hence many a morning struggle. He would begin insidiously by merely resting his chin on the pillow, as if thinking only of an affectionate morning greeting, and perhaps half an inch of dry tongue would come out tentatively ; then two front paws would be raised to the edge of the bed, and if immediate steps were not taken at this point resistance next moment was vain, for the toe of a hind foot would follow, and he would then fling himself with great weight into the middle of the bed, and remain in the hollow like a limpet clinging to a rock, entirely annexing the best of the bed clothes, and it only led to pain and the breaking of toe-joints to try to dislodge him when once fixed.

I was having an unusually lively game with the old dog that morning, and he was trying alternate invasion at the foot and side, when I noticed something unusual in the look of the tent, and it suddenly flashed upon me that my black American-cloth portmanteau was gone. I jumped up and examined the side of the tent and found that the pegs had been pulled up and the box extracted underneath from the outside ; there had been a row of books on the portmanteau,

and these all lay in a tumbled heap on the ground. I had been long enough in Kashmir to have heard tales of similar robberies, and knew almost exactly what to expect; I should find my portmanteau wrenched open, some way off in the woods, and probably such clothes lying about as the thieves thought valueless. I had never kept any money in this box, as it did not close well at the sides, so I took my loss very philosophically at first, and even went back to resume the game with Jones; when all at once a remembrance came which made my heart give a great thud, and I left off playing and dressed as hastily as I could. For I recollected suddenly that my money—over a hundred rupees—had been, for some reason I forget, placed in that box over night; but what was a far more grievous loss to me, the few pieces of jewellery I had brought to India, and which I valued for the sake of those to whom they had previously belonged—these were gone with the box also.

I dressed and called the servants, whose tents were under some trees on a lower level than mine; they showed much surprise and distress, and I bade them search the wood in the direction away from Gulmarg for traces of the missing portmanteau; for I thought no thief would care to encumber

himself with such a tell-tale bit of plunder. Sure enough, on the hill-side under the trees, not three hundred yards from the camp, we found it, torn and wrenched out of shape, with my clothes in a tumbled heap by the side. No wearing apparel had been taken, and my little jewel box lay there on the ground, but the rupees and trinkets only too surely were gone. I sat down and recounted mentally what I had lost. A diamond star and gold locket of my mother's, a gold bracelet which came from some distant great aunt; a gold mohr of the reign of Akbar; a gold neck chain and ruby bracelet handed down from a grandmother;—these were not of surpassing value in themselves, but all the same no money could replace them to me. One thing only was saved, and that was an old gold brooch, which we found trampled in the dust, and which had been evidently dropped and overlooked by the thieves in their haste.

We returned with the recovered property to the tent, and I sent at once for the police. These soon appeared in force, headed by a native of a type the most objectionable to be met with in all India, viz., a bumptious little Baboo with a glib smattering of English.

He stood in the doorway of the tent, and before I had

had time to explain a single fact of the case, announced that he suspected my servants; this I had heard was what the police always did, as an excuse to carry the servants off to jail and raise money from them by ill treatment. I had a decided aversion to allowing this method, and said that while I would assist the police to make every investigation they desired I would not let my servants be taken to prison for examination; so the sleek Baboo shrugged his shoulders, and said, with a meaning smile, "Then we cannot *make* them speak."

I was at the time and always afterwards blamed without exception by every official in Kashmir for this line of conduct, and told that it materially impaired my chance of recovering my property; but yet, with true feminine perversity, I cannot see that I was so much in the wrong. I had five servants with me at this time—cook, bearer, sweeper, syce and a boy we had picked up in Srinagar for getting wood and water; I had no reason for thinking any of them guilty of the robbery, certainly all were not likely to be implicated in it, and it seemed to me unjust that the innocent should suffer equally with the guilty. The police of British India, though improving, are far from what well-wishers of the

country would like to see them; in Kashmir, which is a native State governed only by a few Englishmen in the higher departments, they are several degrees worse than in British territory; their chief purpose is not so much to detect crime as to levy blackmail for their own gain. It seems unquestionable that all through India a certain amount of physical torture is used by the police as a means of making men speak during their investigations; not openly or by order of superiors, but it is permitted *sub rosa*, as a means of eliciting evidence—tying up by the thumbs, beating on the feet, holding the face over a charcoal brazier, keeping a man from sleep, were some of the practices spoken of. An Englishman of high standing said to me once when discussing this subject: "We *have* to torture them; we would never find out anything without it." With all due deference to those whose long experience in the country is entitled to every respect, I cannot help thinking that the practice is a bad one; setting aside the ethics of the question it is not a method attended with good results, as has been neatly said, "It is worse than a crime, it is a blunder." The idea is that under physical pressure a guilty man will own his crime; but equally often under torture an innocent man will

lie to save himself, and put the blame on others perfectly innocent; his only thought is to find out what his tormentors wish him to say and then swear to that; moreover, the guilty man with a long purse will be able to bribe the police to let him off, and this puts a fearful leverage into their hands, either to wreak personal spite or to extort money. They will fasten a charge on some perhaps perfectly innocent victim, wring the last rupee out of him, and then supposing in the end he is able to prove his total innocence, they have only to plead excess of zeal in extenuation of their conduct, and show that there was enough evidence to justify them, for it is also a fact in India that any number of witnesses can *always* be found to swear to a statement, if it is wanted by the police.

Even supposing it was likely to be successful, I hated the thought of recovering my property in this way; my servants had served me with much apparent zeal and faithfulness since I had been left alone, and had done much by their goodwill to temper the sting of loneliness to me; I felt morally certain one or two were innocent of all knowledge of the theft, and even had I thought them all implicated, my dislike to the method would have remained.

Far fetched as it may appear, there was yet another thought which haunted me a good deal at this time, and made me obstinately adhere to my own convictions. A short year before I had spent much time in London at both the British Museum and Record Office, reading the papers left to us by Lord Burleigh, Elizabeth's great statesman, and, like everybody who has gone a little deeper than Macaulay for their estimate of that nobleman, had been much impressed with his sagacity and humanity in times of great stress and provocation; then in the midst of admiration came always the shock of recollecting that this very man, so clear-sighted and modern in many of his thoughts and actions, could deliberately and in cold blood order men to the torture; how was it possible to reconcile such high actions with such loathsome practices? And yet Burleigh would have scorned to use torture for his own private ends, it was only against would-be regicides he turned his instruments; attempts on his own life were let pass with contemptuous indifference; and here was I at the first pinch of a personal injury to swallow all the high principles I had held where Cecil was concerned, and passively acquiesce in five men being put to bodily pain for the sake of a few lost trinkets!

Trial by Teapot

There seems something fantastic in allowing the shade of an old Elizabethan, however worthy, to interfere with one's actions in a country so far removed from his ken as Kashmir; but so it was with me in the absence of any wiser counsellor at hand, and thus for two or three days I stood out firm on the point of allowing my servants to be taken to the jail for examination, and had to bear the outspoken condemnation of the few English officials who took any trouble to advise me in the matter.

Meanwhile the native police pursued their own methods of inquiry, which were more curious and picturesque than effective. They would arrive each morning, a bevy of over a dozen, tell the servants openly that they suspected them, then sit down in a ring and cross-question the men through endless hours, trying to trick them into saying something which might be taken into an acknowledgment of guilt. In vain did I point out that this would only set the thieves on their guard, that it would be better for the police to keep right out of sight and set spies upon the servants, if possible to take them unawares in case they were trying to pass the stolen goods; but it was all to no purpose, the police were far too happy over the bustle and importance the occasion

offered to adopt any outside suggestions. They planned an elaborate function one day in which I was made to take part: I was placed in solemn state in my easy chair in front of the tent, around stood a wide circle of interested turbaned natives; on the ground in front of me squatted on his heels the chief of police (a superior man this, who had been especially sent up from Srinagar, and to my relief could talk no English). He signed to my young cook to squat opposite to him on the ground, a small native teapot was placed between them, and close at hand lay five tightly rolled scrolls of paper on which were written the names of my five servants, so I was given to understand. The teapot had a somewhat broad rim round the top; and now the policeman on one side and the cook on the other, placed a finger under this rim and held the vessel loosely suspended between them; whether there was water in the teapot or not, I cannot remember. Placing one of the scrolls in the spout of the teapot, the man now explained to me that if the paper held written on it the name of the thief, the vessel would give a sign; and so amid the breathless suspense of the whole throng he proceeded to reel off rich sounding incantations. We watched with all our eyes while two

papers passed through the ordeal, then when it came to the third the teapot with calm deliberation made a complete semi-revolution and almost fell from their hands. An exclamation of intense interest burst from the onlookers, the inspector put the paper to one side, remarking *that* was the thief, and the fourth was tried; with this one also the teapot swerved pointedly, at the fifth it remained immovable. Apparently two of my servants were thieves, the policeman now told me, and their names were written on those papers; I appeared profoundly impressed, but to make the conviction more absolute said I would like to shuffle the papers and see if the teapot would a second time give the same results; he consented, and that sagacious little article jibbed at exactly the same two names as before

As a means of regaining my property I doubted if this performance would assist us much, it only indicated whom the police suspected, or at least whom they intended to prosecute; but for unstudied picturesqueness I have seldom taken part in a function to equal it: the strong, characteristic face of the inspector, mumbling his incantations on the ground; the open-eyed wonder of the young cook-boy believing every word he heard; the eager attention of all the

swarthy faces round the ring; the half contemptuous amusement of the bearer, who stood aloof from the others and was far too clever to be frightened by such play-acting, and whom I already half suspected of having committed the theft; close to him the sweeper, a curious taciturn man also not above suspicion. As a setting to this living group were the tall sentinel fir-trees, with the kitchen fire burning brightly beneath, the background of undulating green pasture, where the little river pursued its winding course and flashed back the warm rays of the setting sun; behind that the steep sides of Aphawat, a mountain of 14,000 feet, which loomed large above us, pine-clad half way to the summit, after that smooth snow-clad slopes;—these all formed a picture likely to live in the memory.

The inspector now turned to me and said as I was so tender for my servants' welfare, they would be given one chance more of restitution without having the crime brought openly home to them: a heap of loose earth would be dug at the back of my tent after dark, then each servant in turn would go quite alone and cast a basket-full of earth upon this; it was hoped that the holder of the stolen goods would hide them in his load of earth and so make restitution on

the heap without incriminating himself, for it was to be clearly understood that once the jewels were returned no questions would be asked.

That evening as I finished my dinner I heard the strike of the pick as they prepared the earth at the back—it very much suggested the sound of digging a grave; then the servants, the police and all stragglers gathered in a knot round the fire at some distance, and I closed my tent flap and shut off the outer world, for, as with Lady Godiva at Coventry, there were to be no onlookers to this procession. But listeners there might be, and listen I did with all my ears, in spite of my pretence of reading, as slowly, one after the other at long intervals, came a dull thud as each load in turn was thrown upon the heap. Fives times the sound came, then a pause; the flap of my tent was raised and a native policeman stood there with a lantern, silently waiting for me to follow him. We went outside, and, down on our knees by the dim light from the lantern, we raked with our hands among the soft earth. Would we find anything? Would we see the flash of a diamond or feel a coil of gold between the fingers, and would my pet trinkets peep at me with familiar faces from out of the rich black earth?

Eagerly I routed in every corner, and sifted it all through my fingers; there were no jewels there, and the native rose from his knees and shook his head. I bade him report the fact to his superior, and returned to my tent; in spite of having schooled myself to expect this, and repeated to myself a hundred times that the things would never be returned, this was nevertheless a keen disappointment: so long as even the most remote chance exists, human nature will cling to the hope of it being realised; and this would have been such a welcome end to all my trouble, for though the affair had not lasted a week I was already deadly weary of the constant society of the police, of the rather supercilious indifference of the English officials, and the general atmosphere of suspicion which had crept into the camp.

I determined next day to make an end of it all and went to seek advice from an Englishman who had had much to do with organising the Kashmir police when the force was first inaugurated. I had again to hear from this gentleman how very ill advised my action had been in not sending my servants at once to jail—on this point every one was unanimous; for the rest he assured me my scruples were

quite unfounded, that ill-treating prisoners was now a thing of the past, and beyond being thoroughly frightened no harm would come to them. I believed him at the time, though since have had cause to doubt the absolute truth of this statement; and acting on his advice the police were told to take any measures they wished, so they promptly marched my bearer and sweeper off to prison; the two went away with Eastern stoicism, only taking the precaution of handing me over some of their savings for safe keeping. There were many reasons for suspecting the bearer, he was the only one who could have known that my money was not in the same box as usual that night; he had always been a gambler, and was known to have been gambling late with some men from the neighbouring houses on the night of the theft; moreover, he had always made a special favourite of Jones; and Jones, who had been sleeping in my tent as usual that night, had given no sound of warning. Everything else tended to cast suspicion on the man, and if he were guilty it was hardly likely the sweeper was innocent, for they came from the same place and had always hung together.

Left with practically only one servant, for the syce and

wood-cutting boy hardly counted, I had perforce to give up my tent life and move into the hotel, a mode of life far pleasanter for me under the circumstances, and I only wished I had adopted it sooner; I stayed in it six weeks, and enjoyed there the only sociable time I had in Kashmir.

CHAPTER XIV

HOTEL LIFE AT GULMARG

THE hotel in Gulmarg stands on a spur of raised ground not far from the Club-house, and consists of a main block holding a long dining-room and drawing-room, and a lot of bungalows scattered promiscuously about, in which the visitors lived. There were pine-trees close by, and the servant had only to go a few yards with an axe to get a most liberal supply of wood for one's evening fire, rich resinous pine, which blazed famously and could be burnt recklessly as it only cost the labour of fetching. Every visitor had his pile of firewood outside his door on the verandah, and would periodically point to his neighbour's superior heap, and rate his own servant for laziness; then his own pile would increase for a day or two, and it would soon be his neighbour's turn to grumble.

It was pleasant enough walking up to the dining-room on fine nights with the stars peeping through the pine-trees on one hand, and the cheerful lights of the bungalows on the other, and coming back people would linger and talk on the verandahs, while the men smoked their cigars; but it was a different picture on a pouring wet night. Then the stiff clay soil would become like a greased board, it would often take ten minutes to totter cautiously up a distance of less than a hundred yards, and be cause for thankfulness if one did not measure one's full length more than once in the mud on the way; people would arrive on the dining-room verandah stamping the dirt off their boots, with mackintoshes and umbrellas dripping, and calling loudly for the scalp of the proprietor for not supplying a covered way; that individual, tempering valour with discretion, generally kept out of sight till morning, when a sunny sky and dry path would bring moderation of language. Sometimes when the night was unusually bad, a lady would lack nerve to face the path, and bid her servant bring down the dinner to her own private room; but this so often resulted in both servant and dishes sliding away down the hill, that the wait between the courses came to be

too long thereby, and I myself never tried it more than once.

From the nature of things the hotel was always a great centre of gaiety, it being the only building in Gulmarg where dinners of any size could be given or dances held; thus whatever entertainments were going on, whether public or private, were in our midst. The life was very pleasant, for people were easy and sociable, and I found myself swept into the golfing set before being hardly aware of it. Hitherto I had studiously kept away from the links, being a complete novice, but soon two kind men-folk took me in hand, supervised the purchase of my clubs, and gave me my first sound lessons in driving and putting, then I was invited to join foursomes, and shortly my card of golfing engagements was as full up as most peoples.

Curiously enough the only unpleasantness I had to bear at this time was caused by Jones, the faithful old dog, whose companionship had up till now been such a comfort to me. From the first day of his appearance in Gulmarg his presence had created something of a sensation; on the second day of our arrival we went down to the polo stand together where I expected to meet friends, but as these had not yet arrived

I took a modest seat among a row of strangers while Jones went to rub shoulders among a throng of dogs who had come with their masters, for in Kashmir we all had dogs and took them with us wherever we went. Jones, as I have already said, and as his portrait will bear out, was no beauty, and soon there rose audible comments about him.

"What a dreadful looking dog!"

"Did you ever see such an ugly creature?"

"I say, who *does* that brute belong to?"

"It is *my* dog," I announced, with as much dignity as I could infuse into the remark, which caused an embarrassed silence to fall on the assembly, while I rose and pounced upon Jones just in time to prevent a deadly combat between himself and a brown and white setter.

That was the trouble; he *would* fight every dog in Gulmarg. Whether it was that he was painfully conscious of the many blots on his 'scutcheon and was anxious to prove, like many a man of low degree, that he was "as good as the rest of them"—whatever the cause, the first moment he reached the hotel he systematically set himself to fight every dog in the place. He did not do it with a rush and take them on all at once, but just worked steadily round till there wasn't a

dog, large or small, on whom he had not left his mark; unless, of course, they happened to be ladies, when the prick of his ears and rakish wagging of his stump of a tail were more alarming to the owners of these feminine pets than his angry onslaughts on their male brethren.

It was no good thrashing or trying to tire him out with long rides or to keep him under constant supervision. I would have him close in to heel the whole afternoon up to the very door of my room, when he would vanish slyly; I would run out and call him and he would reappear with exemplary obedience looking very innocent; but those few moments had been spent in chawing up some apparently offenceless animal whom he had down next on his black list, probably having closed up his eye or given him a pinch which would make him go lame for a week, the harrowing details of which would be sure to be retailed to me at dinner by the indignant owner.

I spent my time in making abject apologies, and began at last to mentally classify Gulmarg society into two broad divisions, viz., those who took Jones amiably and those who didn't. As inexhaustible food for merriment and chaffing at table, there was no subject to equal him, even

polo and golf had to rank second ; and I used sometimes sadly to wonder what a Gulmarg season without Jones would be like, after the air had been thick with witticisms at his expense. The apparently harmlessly put query : "Jones been fighting again, Miss Morison ?" would send an instant smile round the table during the dullest pause ; and the often heard remark : "I hear Jones has had another fight," could always be proved true, though the speaker had been probably drawing a bow quite at a venture.

"Jones has no tact," was the best of the bon-mots about him, and was well illustrated by the way he would clumsily sit upon the edge of a lady's dress, rubbing up against her, and perhaps even offering to put two lumbering paws in her lap, while she was in the very act of recounting to me the tale of his offences, for he nourished a fixed illusion that he was a ladies' pet and should be treated as a lap-dog.

After some weeks my nerves could stand the constant anxiety about him no longer, so I wrote to a man of my acquaintance, who was travelling alone up the side valleys, asking if he would take charge of the dog for me. The reply was a prompt assent and suggestion that Jones should be sent to him at once by coolie ; but here again was a

difficulty, for there was no coolie in all Kashmir who could have been induced to hold one end of a string to which Jones was attached at the other, let alone make a three days' march in his company, so the plan had to be abandoned, and Jones stayed with me to the last.

I was not left alone by the police all this time; they would come about every third day, sit solemnly down in my room, say that the men were very obstinate and would confess nothing, and sigh sadly at this singular perversity on the part of a suspected criminal. Any other measures for bringing the crime home to them or attempts to trace the lost property seemed no part of their plan; it was not until I suggested it, that they wrote to Murree to warn the police there to keep a look out in the bazaar for the things, and yet as a large garrison town not far from the frontier it was a very likely place for stolen property to be passed.

After a time the two men were liberated for want of evidence to convict them, and they promptly took out summonses against me for three weeks' wages while in prison, also for the money they had entrusted to me, and two rupees for the summons; the money entrusted I admitted, but the rest of the claim I repudiated. However,

the Resident was now back at Gulmarg and to him I appealed for help; he advised me what to do with most ready kindness and steered me out of all difficulties. Colonel Deane is a type of man which England turns out by the score, and one thanks Providence for it; strong, capable, and tactful, with a complete mastery of the subject in hand whether it be large or small, such men are to be met with everywhere on the frontiers of the Empire, carrying on good work, and one trusts there cannot be much radically wrong with a nation which can produce them. Their names are not trumpeted in the public press, and the "man in the street" may not reckon them among his acquaintance, but their worth is known at Simla and the foundations of their work endure. Such men are restful to deal with after a bountiful experience of mediocrity, and I took my inevitable reprimand for not having sent my servants at once to jail without even the bored feeling of having heard it before.

The two servants came to my rooms for their money and the necessary formalities passed between us with the most perfect outward respect on their part, though I had occasioned them three weeks' detention and they had done

their best to bring me into the Law Court. The sweeper seemed dejected and set off at once to his home in Murree, but the bearer stayed on in Gulmarg and was in a day or two taken on as servant by a young subaltern, who declared he would as soon have an acknowledged thief as an unacknowledged one; a course for which he was dropped upon by some of the senior men I believe, who thought his action showed lack of regard towards a fellow country-woman. With a topsy-turvyness which could only happen in the East, the servant himself begged me to procure him this new situation, and as he and his master were for some time stopping in the hotel, whenever I had to be thankful for any unusually prompt attention at table I always found it came from the hands of my quondam, unconvicted thief.

Towards the end of August there was a crisp feeling in the air night and morning, which reminded one of autumn days at home, and made one remember that snow was always a possible visitor in these heights. There were well authenticated rumours, too, of a bear and her cubs prowling round Gulmarg for food, a sign that the weather on the hills above was colder. Once I had good reason to suspect that the bear was not far from the hotel, for one evening

towards eleven o'clock the dogs in the neighbourhood were particularly restless and barked incessantly; Jones, too, remained with his ears pricked and would not keep silent, so at last I bade him go outside. The rooms next to mine were empty, and feeling rather nervous of thieves or that my old servants might be lurking about, I took the lamp out on to the verandah as a warning that I was on the alert. At that moment Jones came running back round the corner of the house; every hair on his back stood up bristling, his head hung down, and his eyes shone deep red in the lamp light. He rushed past, paying no heed when I called him, went through the sitting-room into the bed-room and through that to the bath-room, where behind the door was an old sleeping-rug of his which he generally scorned to use; this he scratched into a little heap, turned round three times and coiled himself up to sleep with his eyes tightly shut like a child trying to hide from some horrible vision; next morning there were marks of bears' paws round the hotel, and a mangled cow was found by the river.

If I was to see the Sind Valley, and a few other places I had promised myself, it was high time to get on the march again before the passes were blocked with snow. I made

inquiries for any likely travellers with whom I might join forces, but at Gulmarg people came for gaiety and cared nothing about exploring. As at Pahlgam I was assured it was absolutely impossible for me to think of making any such expedition alone, the very suggestion always raised an outcry. I began myself to think it was rather a rash undertaking, and hardly knew how to act; while longing to go I lacked nerve to go against the general opinion.

"How do *you* manage?" I asked one day of a delicate-looking lady who I knew had done alone a journey which men often boasted of. "Do people try and dissuade you?"

She looked surprised at the simplicity of my question. "I, of course, never tell them I am going," she said. "I just go and let them talk afterwards."

I marvelled at my own denseness and adopted her plan with complete success. That night I wrote to the English agency to have tents and camping outfit, and a competent man to manage the coolies, all sent to meet me in a week's time down on the river in a doonga; and in the meanwhile if any one troubled me with inconvenient questions as to my plans, I invented a useful friend whom I expected to meet vaguely "somewhere down the valleys."

During those last days I felt sorry to think that the merry rides, the golfing and dancing, were so soon to be over, though in other ways the thought of a change was pleasant; military society for a time was amusing, but it had its limitations and its small talk was apt to be "shoppy." Probably it was largely my fault for not understanding it, but the personal element which entered so liberally made it dull for an outsider. Such conversations as:

"Have you seen Jimmy Hills of the Blues lately?"

"No, but I met Dobbs of the Blacks last month."

"How nice for old Blank to have got his promotion," are interesting enough when Dobbs is a living reality to you and Jimmy Hills known and loved in the flesh; but a stranger with no knowledge of either is apt to feel he has slipped into a page of Ollendorff.

I grew weary, too, of the ejaculation so often addressed to me: "Fancy your travelling in Kashmir quite alone!" and equally weary of my own stereotyped repartee, "Hobson's choice." It might be good to get away from these for a time and have only books and scenery and the wide mountains for companions. To every citizen of an over-populated country there comes, I suppose, at some

period of his life, a desire to cut away from civilisation and go wild for a time. It is not so much the dislike of one's fellow creatures as the craving for a life of animal freedom, with the sky for a roof and the earth for a pillow and no beaten tracks to follow. During my stay in Kashmir I was able to gratify this instinct a good deal, and had I been a man I would have done so much farther. I used often to wonder then (and do so still) why the Thoreaus and Gorkys of this life never truly had the courage of their opinions, and broke away from the civilisation which they affect so to despise; there are plenty of waste spaces on the earth, and Central Asia is very wide. Tolstoi and such as he have a Gospel to preach to the world, so they do well to dwell with mankind, but the others can see nothing which is not worthy of blame and destruction, yet are not too proud to live upon the labour of the society they denounce. Men acted more wisely in the olden days. When "Welt-Schmerz" seized a man he hied him to the wilderness as a hermit, to pray for himself and his fellows, and men felt the world was better for his holiness; but the modern sceptic has lost faith both in himself and God, so he stays to curse instead of retiring to pray.

CHAPTER XV

ON THE MARCH ONCE MORE

It was a glorious morning when I left Gulmarg, and the golf links as I passed over them looked their greenest and best. It was strange to think that in a month's time they would probably be under snow, stranger still to reflect that the whole place would be wrapped in thirty feet of snow all through the winter, and that the hotel and all the buildings we knew so well, would be barely distinguishable, save for a protruding chimney-pot, under that carpet of white. But so it is with Gulmarg, a season of three months with bright dresses flashing and the band always playing, then the silence of utter lifelessness, for even the birds and animals forsake it for lower slopes.

There were three degrees of departure when a lady left Gulmarg; either she was bidden good-bye at the hotel steps, when hats were waved and hearty words of adieu spoken,

but her absence was perhaps not *very* much regretted; or a band of friends would escort her across the mile and a half of "marg" and bid farewell on the brink of the hill where the steep downward path was reached; or, again, there was the third order of cavalier, who escorted his lady to the very bottom of the hill and did not leave her till the hurrying post-carriage swept her away from his gaze. Not to give an impression of more personal magnetism than I possess, I will state at once that my cavaliers belonged to the second order, and that I was only seen to the brink of the hill; but I could console myself with the reflection that after all it was usually a single cavalier who went the whole distance to the bottom, the adage about only two being company seemed to hold good on the narrow path.

Having still a vivid recollection of the pains of the ride up to Gulmarg, I performed the return journey in a leisurely way by sharing a phaeton with my friend of Pahlgam, Miss Barclay. Taken thus in pleasant company the twenty miles seemed short, and we were careful not to linger or touch food (save what we had brought with us) at the dak-bungalow in Margan, for cholera had maintained a steady hold there during the summer. Indeed, on all hands

and from every part of the country, we heard somewhat alarming rumours of cholera, and that I may not seem to make myself out more courageous than I am, I will here confess that at this period I went through a good attack of what is known as cholera funk. In the spring, when reports of cholera had gone about, I had been agreeably surprised at the coolness with which I had heard them; it is an illness of which I had always felt I would have a great personal dread, and here I was brought to its very neighbourhood taking it all very calmly. But I made amends for this now. Suddenly it came upon me what a long journey I was making, absolutely alone; how numerous were the chances of falling ill in some far-away valley, which no doctor could reach till the crisis was passed and the native servants would probably flee away in terror. The most sad death of an Englishman on his honeymoon had recently brought home to us the fallacy of the saying that it was only the natives who died of cholera: was it worth it all? Just then it hardly seemed so, and had I had any near friends in northern India, I verily believe I would then and there have turned and left it all, but, being practically alone on that great continent, I stayed and braved it out from want of any

alternative course. There are some people so happily constituted that, however alone they may stand in the world, they have always (by their own accounts) a circle of enthusiastic friends who insist on regulating their conduct for them, down to the smallest details—how gladly would I have listened to such friends that summer! I remember shortly after leaving Kashmir I was making a long railway journey, and after having had the carriage many hours to myself a bustling little lady invaded the compartment with a crowd of miscellaneous luggage among which was a grey parrot in a cage. I was not over pleased at this apparition, but as we had the prospect of eighteen hours together I thought it as well to show a conciliatory spirit by remarking that it seemed a nice bird. The lady replied that she really did not know if it was or not, it had only just been pressed upon her at parting by a friend. She hadn't wished to have it, she said; in fact, would rather have come away without it, and the friend's husband set great store by the bird, and the children had stood round weeping at its departure, but the friend was so sorry at her going that she simply *insisted* on her accepting the creature, and there he was. Such a vision of enthusiastic friendship as her words conjured up, I confess,

made me very envious; no friend has ever pressed a parrot (cage and all) into my reluctant arms on the eve of a journey. If they come to the station to see me off it is as far as the friendship reaches; they will ask me my plans, but never dream of offering emendations. Different temperaments acquire their different circles round them.

Where road and river nearly meet, at a spot called the place of the four chenars, I left the phaeton, bade good-bye to Miss Barclay, and stepped into the cleanest and most choice-looking little "doonga" which had been sent down to meet me with all the camping things. A doonga has poles to support the rush-mat roof and sides, which convert it into a very serviceable house-boat. For warm weather it is both an ideal and picturesque craft, being cool and easily ventilated. There is a certain feeling of shyness at first when one realises that a passing breeze may at any moment blow the mats to one side and expose the timid occupant to the curious eyes of whatever public may be in the neighbourhood, and breezes, as is well known, are no respecters of persons; but these accidents on the whole occur but seldom, and one soon grows case-hardened to the thought.

The very real objection most Europeans entertain against

A DOONGA

Face p. 192

a doonga is the fact that the rush-matting is apt to harbour so much undesirable live company. There is a quaint Kashmir proverb, "The flea sinned, but the matting got the beating." But after a harassed night of torment one feels that if only the punishment were applied more often the offence would be less frequent.

It was curious being plunged back into summer again after the wintry spell at Gulmarg; down here on the river it was quite warm, even at night; gnats and mosquitoes hummed around, and a glorious cloudless sunset tinted the mountain ranges with a lovely opal hue, suggesting the close of a fine August day at home.

As soon as the ponies and baggage arrived we dropped down stream, and tied up, towards ten o'clock, for the night not far from Shadipore, where the Sind river joins the Jhelum. We were moving again by daybreak, and I again rejoiced that I was in a doonga and not a house-boat; there is a great charm in being able to pull aside the matting while still lying in bed and watch the sun spreading over the valleys and see the morning mist rolling away. The water was so near one could dip one's hand in without stretching uncomfortably from the bed, and when the early cup of tea

came it was convenient to have Nature's slop-basin so handy to dispose of the dregs. There were, of course, moments of excitement and embarrassment when another boat came gliding along so quietly as to be unobserved, and it was then necessary hastily to lower the mat, or, if time did not allow of this, the next best thing was to duck one's head under the bed-clothes and pretend an "alibi."

I was familiar with this part of the valley, having already visited it on first coming into the country on the way up from Baramulla, but even so the beauty of the scenery struck me afresh on this gloriously cloudless morning. The river Sind, for some miles here, loses itself in marshy land where tall rushes, water-lilies and willow bushes give shelter to endless varieties of graceful little birds; the water is so clear that the fish can be plainly seen swimming below, and a few low-lying islands give grazing-ground for horses and cattle, a string of which might now and then be seen lazily wading through the water in search of better pasture. As the boatmen punted along the winding channel we had ever on our right the two distinctive hills which dominate Srinagar, the fort-clad hill of Hari-Purbat, and the higher temple-crowned hill called the Takht-i-Sulaiman; while

Face p. 194

A BOAT GIRL

straight in front, running the whole way from east to west, stretched a glorious mountain range, out of which the snow-clad peak of old Haramuk rose grand and rugged. It was a morning in which to sit idly, hands in lap, and simply enjoy the calm sunshine and blue mountains. A perfect peace and stillness rested everywhere, only broken by the queer grunting noises of the boatmen as they encouraged each other in their work, and the soft thud of their bare feet as they walked leisurely backwards and forwards on the prow, punting.

We rested the second night at Gunderbal, one of the most grilling places with an undeserved reputation for coolness that I have ever experienced. The reputation is founded on the fact that the nights there are always cold, for the Sind comes down in a straight rush from the snows, and even in the height of summer its waters remain icy cold, therefore as soon as the sun goes down the temperature, near the river at least, falls very rapidly.

Above Gunderbal the Sind is a wild unnavigable torrent, so here next day I bade farewell to my charming little doonga and took to the march once more. It was pleasant again to see one's "camp-sticks" resolve themselves

into neat bundles on the bank; the collapsible chairs and tables, the bed which looked like a bundle of sacking, and the meat-safe going off on its solitary pick-a-back ride. I travelled in much greater peace this time; first, because I had greatly reduced my luggage, secondly, because I had hired a man through the agency to make all arrangements with the coolies; consequently, instead of having an hour's grumbling over the loads every morning before starting, our departure was so swift and quiet as to be almost tame. There is truth in the often heard saying, "that it needs a Kashmiri to deal with Kashmiris," and though my head-man Subano was perpetually trying to cheat me himself, he kept the others from troubling.

The Sind valley is broad and fertile along the first day's march, the mountains which enclose it are plentifully wooded, suggestive of good hunting-ground; the flatter portions of the valley are devoted to rice, which now (towards the middle of September) was growing ready for harvesting. When rice is only a few weeks' old it looks like grass of a dazzling emerald green; when full grown it much resembles, from a distance, a field of barley. The road was wonderfully smooth and easy for Kashmir, and

KASHMIRI BOAT-WOMAN

Face p. 197

indeed, if bumping had not been considered a drawback, it would have been nearly possible to use a dog-cart most of the two first days' march; I, however, made use once more of the inevitable Kashmir pony. The few villages we passed were very picturesque, with their crooked wooden houses, the babbling brook running through them, by whose banks heavy foliaged walnut-trees and feathery willows grew thickly side by side. Pretty Kashmir girls drove the small dark cattle about, or fetched water from the stream, poising the round earthenware pots skilfully on their shoulders. Surely, if they were only cleaner, Kashmir women would rank among the most well favoured by Nature; in these country places their short skirts, stopping at the knee, gave a graceful freedom of movement; the wide, rolled-back sleeves of the nondescript upper garment made their wrists and hands look daintily small, however rough the work they might be doing, and the straight head-dress hanging down behind, reminded one of the picturesque women of Italy. Unfortunately the bright Italian colours are here wanting, for all are dressed alike in the universal drab—a drab which one knows full well only needs the action of soap and water to turn to a snowy white.

In sharp contrast to these pretty Kashmir women were the groups of wild-looking Ladakhis we met coming down the valley, for this is the great high-road into Ladakh and Central Asia; undoubtedly if a respectable London policeman met one such on his beat, he would feel justified in running him in on sight, and yet their appearance belies them, for they are a good-humoured, peaceable race, and usually gave me a respectful "salaam" as I passed; sometimes they had load-bearing "yaks" with them, a short-legged, long-haired, powerfully built species of cattle, who are natives of Ladakh, and have horns more like those of the Highland animals. The first day's march lasted five hours, and was quite uneventful save once, when the path dipped down a narrow incline, and before I was hardly aware of it I found myself in the midst of a drove of thirty or forty camels; they were apparently a self-conducted party, travelling without any loads, and to my prejudiced mind seemed unusually large and evil-looking of their kind. There is no animal so sly, and at the same time so supercilious looking, as a camel; they seem as if trying to walk over you just to show how absent-minded they are. These I met had no idea of ceding the path, and as I

steered the pony in and out among their towering forms, I hardly knew whether to dread most their vicious-looking mouths, or the long, far-reaching legs. When we had passed safely through them, we met the driver coming up a quarter of a mile behind.

I also passed and re-passed several times a beautiful Kashmir girl, riding like myself a small native pony, while a man, presumably her husband, ran by the side of her. As she overtook me for the third time she threw a laughing head back in answer to my smile and asked me gaily, over her shoulder, whither I was going, showing while she did so a pearly row of teeth. I could not help reflecting how much more suitably dressed she was for the journey than myself. Instead of a side-saddle she sensibly bestrode her animal, and her neat little wrinkled trousers were much more suggestive of modesty than my skirt, which flew up at any passing breeze; and once again I resolved that if Fate ever sent me wandering again in an unfrequented country, a small Cawnpore saddle and garments, in some degree after the masculine pattern, should form part of my kit.

That night we should have camped at a village called Kangam, but cholera had been there recently so we pushed

some two miles further on, to a pleasant green spot half enclosed by a winding stream and shaded by four immense chenars. There was a married couple camping there also, but with true English aloofness we never visited or even saw each other, either that evening or the following morning.

CHAPTER XVI

SONAMARG

It was lovely sunshine next morning and I breakfasted out in the open while my tent was struck and the four ponies packed. There was something very fascinating in these out-door breakfasts, the lovely scenery around, which one had been too tired to appreciate thoroughly overnight, the bright dew shining on the grass, and the busy stir of the coolies getting the loads ready. The road was easy again to-day, though as the valley narrowed the scenery grew grander. It was noticeable again, as in the Liddar valley, how the pines grew only on the northward facing slopes, so that while the range on my right was thickly covered, that on the left was nearly wholly bare, save for a yellowy brown grass which gave the effect from a distance of large lichen-covered tracts.

The main charm of the Sind road lies in the varied

types of men that are to be met there; Baltis, Ladakhis and Gujars all come by in troops with their distinctive dress and features. My coolie told me the Baltis were pleasant and clean men, Muhammedans also, with whom Kashmiris would share their food; but that the Ladakhis were dirty people with whom no Kashmiri would eat. It was interesting to know this, for I had thought, like most other travellers in the country, that no race could be dirtier than the Kashmiri.

After four hours' marching the valley bifurcated, and we followed the left branch to reach Sonamarg, the object of our journey. It was here that I met with the only event which could be dignified with the name of an accident during my solitary wanderings. The road was perfectly smooth, crossing a flat stretch of land overgrown by low bushes. The coolie was in front; I was jogging along comfortably, sitting in a somewhat fancy position, for I was cramped with the long ride, when the pony, probably awakening from a doze, suddenly gave a violent start backwards. Out of the saddle I shot, and must have made a complete somersault, for I found myself falling face upwards to the sky, and had a clear vision of the pony's

BALTI CARRIERS IN THE SIND VALLEY

RUINED TEMPLES IN THE WANGAT VALLEY

Face p. 202

neck and shoulder looming over me. Even in those few seconds I had time to wonder whether I should ever meet the ground, whether it would be very hard when I did meet it, and if this was the way people got concussion. Then I felt a tremendous thud, as my shoulders and head met the earth, and found myself beating off the pony, who continued to advance, and had now planted both feet in my lap. The coolie turned back at my cry and removed the pony; Jones ran up to lick my face and I crawled to the nearest bush and lay down out of breath to await results. After two minutes thus spent, it gradually dawned upon me that there were not going to be any results—as in Mark Twain's story, there was not to be any core to this apple. After all, a long line of hard-headed Aberdeen ancestors counts for something, and, as I rose and dusted my clothes and remounted my steed, I felt some pride in reflecting that this rather sharp shock had not caused me the faintest suggestion of a headache.

We camped two hours farther on at Revil, a pretty spot shaded by tall walnut-trees; a noisy stream passed within six yards of the ground, and it was pleasant to reflect that it came straight and swift from the mountains, bringing no

diseases with it, and that we were now out of reach of cholera. As the coolies were about an hour behind, I turned the pony loose and lay back comfortably among the roots of the trees, which made a splendid arm-chair. I had thrust a new novel into the tiffin basket, and with this I spent the time. It turned out to be one of the modern decadent school, and very funny the cant phrases about "modern civilisation" and "advanced schools of thought" sounded among these mountain wilds. One could not help wondering how much late nights, bad digestion, and polluted London atmosphere might have to do with the jaundiced view of life affected by some writers, and whether a short spell of a more animal existence—open air and a few tumbles with Nature when she is at her ruggedest and grandest—would not sweep away some of the cobwebs which cloud their brains.

The next day was again so gloriously hot that the elaborate preparations I had made against the cold seemed so many useless encumbrances. The march was particularly lovely, the mountains narrowed in, the torrent became wilder, the path ran beside it up hill and down, shaded from the hot sun by walnuts, evergreen oaks and birch-

AVALANCHE IN THE SIND VALLEY

Face p. 205

trees, while below was a rich carpet of ferns, tall flowering grasses, and pretty yellow balsams. A plant which grew in great profusion and lent much colour to the landscape was a shrub about three feet high with waxy orange berries. Both leaf and fruit much resembled our own elderberry in shape; when ripe the berries turned to the most brilliant claret hue.

The path, on the whole, was good; only in one spot, where the crag rose smooth as a wall three or four hundred feet above us on the left, and fell away equally deep on the right to the torrent below, was there the least suggestion of unpleasantness. Here many lives are lost yearly, the coolie said, both of men and ponies, by avalanches of falling snow catching the unfortunate passers on this open spot; when once swept off the path there was no hope of rescue from the foaming water beneath.

The valley finally narrowed almost to a gorge, vast crags rose on either side, then with a bend to the left we emerged into open meadow land, overgrown by a few sparse birches; the torrent ceased its roaring and the blueness of the waters, taking the reflection from the sky above, rivalled the Mediterranean. Straight in front rose a jagged

mountain absolutely bare or vegetation, its peaks of pearly grey looking dazzling in the sunshine. Suddenly a cloud, nestling on the pine-clad mountains behind us, plunged the whole gorge, through which we had come, into gloom, and appeared to cut us off more completely from the valley we had left. When the cloud lifted there was a delicate sprinkling of snow on the summits as if giants had been sifting sugar over their cakes.

I settled down to lunch with a warm flat stone for a table, and was leisurely enjoying the sight of a lot of Balti carriers who were taking a rest like myself, and some pack-ponies who were passing laden with birch-bark (which is here used for paper, and when packed in bundles for transport much resembles a roll of newspapers), when a most pathetic whimper from Jones reminded me that there was one dissatisfied being in this smiling landscape of peace, and that Nature (as the text-book says) "abhors a vacuum," even in a little dog's stomach; so after this hint we shared our cold mutton and potato, and tried to deal honestly over the rice pudding, which was very small.

Taking a path to the right we still had two miles to go, over green undulating land amphitheatred by hills, till we

reached the camping-ground overhanging the stream, on the other side of which were the few log huts of Sonamarg. The guide-book says that Sonamarg is a healthy spot. It should be so. If a place 8500 feet high, with a hundred miles or so of Himalayan snows around it and a resident population of about forty souls, cannot keep its health, what hope is there for any of us?

My tent was pitched within three yards of the great high-road, which, as the guide-book quaintly says, "leads to Central Asia." It is here about the size of a sheep-track, and I should think one coolie an hour passed by as I sat and watched until dusk set in; this was not, of course, counting women and children who came and went frequently in picturesque rags, either going out to their fields or driving home the ponies. As the evening light settled over the mountains, Sonamarg became a peculiarly beautiful spot. Sufficient clouds had come banking up in the afternoon to make me nervous about the possibility of trying the pass next day, but now they drifted away, and the slanting sun bade a brilliant farewell to this green vale; the hills took new lights and shadows, the sheep in long line came slowly crawling down from the heights above and

scattered for a last feed on the grass beside the stream; curling wreaths of smoke rising in the air showed that the few inhabitants were cooking their evening meal. Then greyness settled over everything, the air grew cold, Jones was led away by the servant to have his coat put on, the bearer brought my one candle and laid out the table for dinner, the flap of the tent was let down, and I made myself snug for the night.

* * * * *

That night, after I got to bed, there was a storm; thunder rumbled round in the mountains, and I saw the flashes of lightning under the edge of the tent. All of a sudden the wind came with a fearful rush up the valley and caught the tent full on the side, making the whole structure rock. I wondered for a few minutes whether it would not be lifted bodily from the ground and then collapse upon me. Then was my remissness brought home to me in not having seen for myself if the ropes were strong, the pegs well driven home, and the trench properly dug, and I felt like a mariner who has put to sea in an untrustworthy boat, that my sins were finding me out. All I could do was to get my long fur-cloak ready to hand, in

case I should find myself rudely thrust out on to the mountain side; but luckily there was no need for it, the storm passed off into rain, to the loud sound of which pattering on the canvas I again dropped off to sleep.

The next morning the rain was still pattering, and in my heart of hearts I felt a sneaking joy in the sound, for though the camp was to remain this day at Sonamarg, the guide had planned a long day's ride for me on the road to Baltal. This was now impossible, and, instead of an early rise and hurried breakfast, I luxuriously enjoyed a cup of tea in bed and revelled in a long, undisturbed read.

At four o'clock the weather repented, the sun came out, and the green slopes took on once more their lovely lights and shades, like soft, moss-brown velvet falling in graceful folds; so I summoned the guide, and together we followed the path which, as previously stated, "leads to Central Asia." The destination sounds so immense, and the way itself was so humble, that it exercised a powerful fascination over me. I would have liked to erect a signpost with solitary arm bearing that brief inscription, "To Central Asia," and to have followed it on and on without much

thought of days and distance. There is exhilaration in the feeling of unlimited vastness, in the possibility of endless expansion without the fear of being suddenly confronted by the limitations of civilisation. England is the most beautiful and historic little isle in the world, but it sometimes appears over-populated. It would be an easy solution of many of our social problems if we could have a high-road running from the heart of London to "Central Asia." What strange pilgrims would be found journeying there upon it!

After widening out to allow room for the long, oval meadows of Sonamarg, the mountains close in again above it, one hill spur on the left jutting prominently forward, and here, where the gorge was narrowest, the guide showed me traces of a fort, though only loose crumbled stones remain to show the line where the wall had been; still, it needed little imagination to see what a splendid place of defence this must have been, entirely dominating the valley. Straight beneath lay the rushing torrent, with a precipitous jungle-covered hill the other side. At the back the mountain rose perpendicularly and, as if Nature had not felt satisfied with this defence alone, a curious strata of

rock ran from the fort right up the hill, forming an impassable wall of thirty or forty feet high. I longed to know more of this fort, and of the people who had passed and repassed this way, conquerors or invaders of the fertile Kashmir valley, but it is one of the disappointing things about the country that little is to be gleaned, either from books or hearsay, of the buildings of former times, or the history of the men who built them.

Beyond the fort the path meanders pleasantly at the foot of grassy slopes, and disappears from view round a bend of the valley, pursuing its patient way to the heart of the great continent. There I had to leave it regretfully, for I could not follow it the whole way, and a mile more or less makes little impression on "Central Asia"; but the view, as I last saw it, was one to remember, for straight in front towered a snow-capped peak, dazzling in the evening sun, the lesser mountains were only slightly sprinkled, and through the white snow and the green grass jutted those long stratified rocks, as if Nature was showing bare ribs through her clothing. I stood long taking a last look, till the guide, who was also a huntsman, told me of the possibility of seeing bears come out from the wood for

their evening meal, on the opposite slopes; and, as it was the height of my ambition to see a bear, I turned my back on the more fanciful attractions of "Central Asia" for this new interest, and we made the return journey, treading softly and speaking in undertones, lest we might frighten the timid bruin, but neither on this nor any subsequent occasion was my desire to see the brown or black bear on his native wilds ever gratified.

On regaining the camp it was crudely borne in upon me that mutton was to be my staple of diet for the next few days, by the sight of the cook and a strange man actively arguing over a live sheep which stood between them, into whose wool the cook was digging his fingers. I was at once appealed to, to settle the discussion, the man wanting four rupees and my servants saying that R3.8 was enough. Not having the faintest idea on the subject I promptly voted for the lower figure, and announced with the air of having bought mutton *en bloc* all my life, that I would not dream of giving more than three and a half rupees for a sheep, all the while feeling strongly inclined to turn vegetarian on the spot, when I reflected that it was I alone and single-handed who would have to wade through

that sheep. Butchers' shops and well-appointed cuisines hide many of the crudities of existence from us; how many city men would enjoy their daily chop if they were first introduced to the live sheep who was to supply the delicacy?

CHAPTER XVII

WANGAT TO HARAMUK

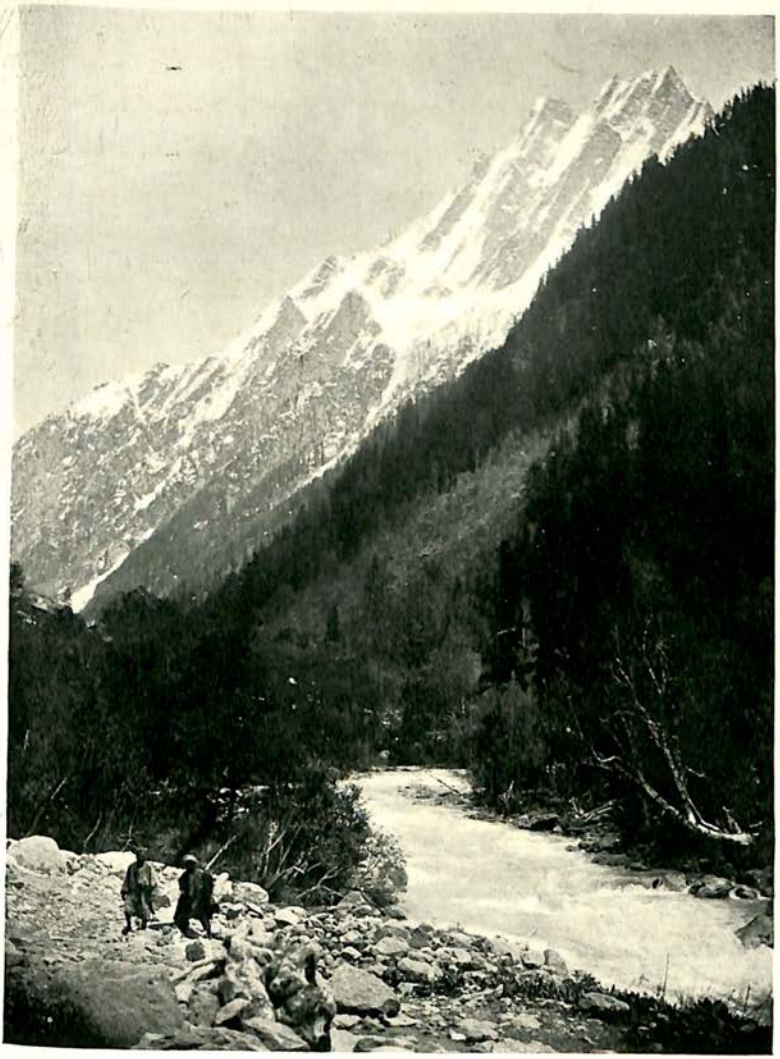
THE next day I awoke in a thoroughly bad temper, there is no good denying it; for it was raining, and though the delight of having tea in bed was great, it was not so great as on the first day, while the prospect of another twenty-four hours of my own company at Sonamarg, cooped up in my little tent, was appalling. I could stand my own company very well on the march, in fact I sometimes found myself quite entertaining, but to be shut up in a tent in pouring rain—that bred the blues.

At half past nine it cleared; the sun came out and I was all smiles likewise, so ordered the shikari to pack up and take me by the new pass, which would lead to the mountain of Haramuk; when lo and behold! the man hummed and hawed, said that this route, on whose beauties he had been expatiating so much for days, would now be

closed by last night's snow; of course, if I insisted, we could try, but we should probably not get over the passes, and be in the end obliged to turn back. And then another coolie came and joined his voice to the first, giving a graphic description of how the ponies would go tumbling down the precipices, getting killed and losing all the baggage, till I felt that to insist would be to endanger the lives of the whole expedition; but I was all the same annoyed, for I did not know how much of this talk was due to the men's desire to shirk the rougher route, and I had lately set my heart on going this way just because it *was* rougher; and even if there were some risk of trouble with a few days' march over the snows, I was prepared to face it, for I wanted to secure a nice exciting ending to my wanderings. It is curious how the desire for adventure will take unexpected hold of one. Up in the hotel at Gulmarg, surrounded by many people, I had felt quite nervous over this expedition alone. To be away in the wilds unaccompanied by a single European seemed then quite alarming; but I had not been two days on the march before I had quite determined to attempt this somewhat difficult route, by Nichinai to Mount Haramuk and thence to the

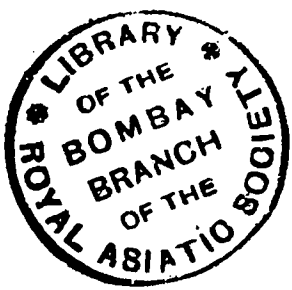
Erin Valley; an expedition against which, I may add, I had been expressly warned by my kind agents, as being too rough and lonely for a lady alone. The very loneliness was a great charm, and made me anxious to exchange it for the Sind. Certainly the Sind was beautiful enough, but then I had to share its beauty with a telegraph wire, and that alone did away with all feeling of remoteness. It was only like make-believe at being away in the wilds, when at any moment I could drop a message into Srinagar if anything happened to me, and though, with the prevalence of cholera about, that ought to have been a comfort, it was only a source of irritation. I wanted to get right away into more untrodden ground, and a dim inkling of what genuine explorers must feel, with their burning desire to press onward, came upon me in those hills.

So there was nothing to do but to return for two days' march down the Sind by the way we had come, and then strike up the Wangat valley and reach Haramuk by those easier slopes. By way of consolation I made extra long marches those two first days—not perhaps more than sixteen miles, and I fancy how I can hear the modern bicyclist and motorist scoffing at such a distance, but then



Face p. 216

SIND VALLEY


LIBRARY
OF THE
BOMBAY
BRANCH
OF THE
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

this was not a cycling road, and it would also make a difference to the bicyclist if not only his house, his bed and his table, but his stores for three weeks, his larder, his lamps and his servants' baggage, had to come behind him on coolies' backs.

The first night we camped at Gund, a lovely camping spot. My tent stood on a semicircular patch of grass overhanging the river, and a walnut-tree stood outside the door. On the other side of the stream was a pointed fir-clad hill, behind which the young moon rose brightly. Up the valley to the left lay the bleak snow-clad mountains we had left, and lazily drifting half way up them, as if too tired to mount higher, were long whisps of woolly clouds. Down the valley to the right the sun had set, leaving a lovely opal hue in the sky in which one star appeared and shone brightly long before its fellows. Some little distance from mine the servants had pitched their smaller tent under another walnut-tree; they had a bright camp-fire burning, and their turbaned heads, as they moved around it busily preparing dinner, and the groups of coolies sitting round in their blankets, taking a rest after the day's march, looked wonderfully picturesque.

Next night we camped on the spur of land formed by the junction of the Sind and Wangat valleys, and the following day pursued the windings of the latter valley past the village of Wangat to the ruins of some old temples; (see illustration *ante*). These ruins stand in a commanding position overhanging the torrent, but the jungle has grown so thickly round them, pine-trees even finding foothold in the ruined roofs, that they can only be seen from near. The style of architecture was very similar to the other temples I had already seen, and chiefly imposing from the massiveness of the stones used; but like all the other ruins I saw in Kashmir, I felt myself too ignorant of their history to be able to attach a human interest to them. There was some difficulty about fixing the camping-ground that night, for the best place, near the temples, was already occupied by an Englishman who had come for shooting. We pushed on farther, but the spot my men selected was so dirty that I declined to remain there. Then the guide pointed out a pleasant-looking place lower down by the river, to which I consented to move, but when we got there the cook began to turn up his nose, saying it was worse than the first place. Certainly there were all-pervading

evidences of cows and buffaloes, of which the whole air smelt rather strongly, but everywhere the grass seemed equally dirty, so I was weakly about to give in, by trying to persuade myself that, on the whole, it was a healthy smell, when the little cook, who had all this time been actively poking about, discovered a dead cow in a bush only a few feet from us. That was enough, even for the sweeper (the lowest caste servant), and we made a general stampede to higher ground. Here under a clump of young walnuts was found a small space, just large enough to take my tent; it was slightly on a slope, so the bed, table and chairs had all to be levelled up with stones on one side to make them stand straight. It is surprising what a slight incline will upset the equilibrium of one's furniture, and to lie in bed where one continually keeps slipping to the bottom, or to eat from a table where plates and glasses stand all awry, is most uncomfortable.

I was just settling to a comfortable tea under the trees, when with a wild rush a dozen or so brightly dressed Gujar men came galloping up the slope on bare-backed ponies; they reined in a little when they saw the tent, for the Gujar folk were always courteous, until Jones, startled at this

invasion, came out and barked furiously; then up the hill they dashed, harder than ever, for he always inspired a most wholesome terror in those good people's breasts.

The following day (September 23) was one long climb up, up and up, over a grassy hill, by a path which did nothing to mitigate the rigours of the ascent. It was a hill which the Swiss would have circumvented by a winding road of such gradual ascent that the slope would have been barely perceptible. The Kashmiri, having no tourists to consider, and with full confidence in his own legs, faces the difficulty almost perpendicularly, and makes one mile where the other would do ten. But what a mile! The path was a narrow sheep-track of loose, dry earth, on which it was difficult to get foothold; ferns and wild rose-trees obstructed the way, and if a projecting tuft of grass enabled one now and again to get a momentary flat foot-rest, the relief was indescribable. At an early stage the guide made a rope of his turban, passed a loop of it round my waist, and with the other end over his shoulders, gave me material assistance that way. For the first half-hour I stepped up bravely, determined to strain little on the turban, and show him how much superior at hill-climbing I was, to other

ladies with whom he had had to deal. Towards the end of the first hour my pride cooled; it was, after all, better to lean a little than exhaust myself before the top was reached. By the second hour I had no trace of pride left, and leaned as much as possible on my support—the man must obviously be more used to this sort of thing than I was, and suppose it did tire him a little—was that not what he was paid for? The third hour passed and still, though the valley sank lower and lower beneath us, and we got a more bird's-eye view of the neighbouring valleys, yet the green hill above loomed as forbidding as ever, and the top seemed always as remote. Had the man now offered to lift me on his shoulders, I would have been only too grateful to accept the offer. The strain on the muscles grew intolerable, and every rest served only to accentuate the stiffness on starting afresh. The guide-book says "the views are lovely," but what profits a lovely view when your face is for ever glued to the mountain side, hunting for a foothold in a perpendicular path? All power of thinking and rational reflection seemed to desert one; every sense was merged in the over-mastering desire to reach the summit of that deadly hill.

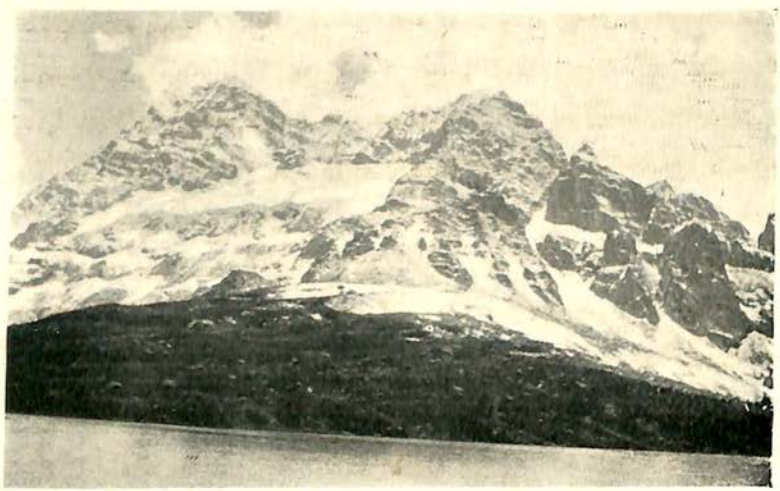
Towards four o'clock I made a longer halt for a tardy lunch, and still the top was far away; but presently we struck into a few pine-trees, which somewhat relieved the monotony of the road. After that more steep grass again, and then we came among birch-trees, those sure indicators of a high altitude. Here the path struck to the right and wound round a precipice, and I took another welcome rest while my shikari went to reconnoitre the ground and see if the others were following; for there was a strange silence behind us which suggested the disquieting thought that the coolies, when safely out of our sight, might have put down the luggage on the hillside and gone home, a not infrequent occurrence if the march is long and difficult. There was no reply to the far-echoing calls and whistles the guide sent down the hill; one man only out of the ten came in sight, bearing with him the servants' bedding and my pots and pans—and pots and pans are but a hollow mockery when there are no provisions to put in them. Had it been possible we would have decided to go no further, and thus give the men a chance of sooner coming up with us, but of the two indispensable adjuncts of a camping-ground—wood and water—the latter was missing, so we pushed on a mile

further to Troncol, the regular camping spot. The path thither was more level, and round a curve of the hill we came upon a fresh green vale, clothed on the lower slopes with birch-trees, and with the summits merging into the snow. High above all towered, on the left, the hoary summit of old Haramuk, that mountain I had seen so often, in the distance, gathering storms round his ancient head and then sending them sweeping down to the Wular lake to terrify the timid boatmen on its waters. We left the path, and descended over rough boulders to more level ground, where stood a clump of birch-trees, many of them dead, whose white stems and branches glistened strangely in the gathering twilight. The sun had set, and we were all bitterly cold, for we were at an altitude of over 10,000 feet high, and a sharp wind was blowing off the snows; Haramuk alone in his giant arms nursing enough ice to keep London supplied for twenty years.

The servants had kept up with me, but were very sulky. I was deadly tired, and Subano, the guide, was the only cheerful and active one of the party. He gathered firewood together, sent to some shepherds, who some way off had a small tent in the midst of their vast flocks, for some

cinders, and in less than no time we had a bright fire burning. Luckily my saddle-pony had come up with us, though, of course, it had been far too steep for me to ride him all day ; but every Kashmir pony has a blanket under the saddle to prevent it galling him, and this I now annexed, for it is never given to the animal as a covering at night. It may not have been very clean, it is true, but that was the last matter for consideration. I wrapped myself in it on the ground, placed the saddle as usual for a back-rest, and thus, seated before a bright fire, life took on a different aspect. When, after half an hour, the one pack-pony we were employing that journey came marching in, with my bundle of bedding slung on one side and the tent canvas on the other, I grew quite indifferent as to whether the rest followed that night or not. The lateness of my lunch had made me indifferent about supper, and I knew there was half the wing of a fowl and one cold potato to do for breakfast, in the tiffin-basket—not sumptuous fare, perhaps, but enough to stave off a famine. Subano was fretting greatly because the tent-poles had not arrived, but I had already noted a large recumbent birch-tree which formed an arch from the ground. Should the poles not

CAMPING NEAR HARAMUK



VIEW OF HARAMUK FROM THE GANGABAL LAKE

Face p. 225

arrive I was quite prepared to spread the tent-canvas over this tree, which would have allowed just room for myself and bedding underneath. So I snuggled contentedly into the blanket and began to doze, and when I awoke again the daylight had quite gone, the moon was rising, and the cook was hotly blaming Subano because everything had gone wrong. Then I nodded off again, and was this time awakened by Subano's voice roundly rating a newly-arrived coolie, accompanied by the sound of resounding slaps; truly the poor man's temper had been sorely tried for the last two hours, but it seemed to me that he was taking out vengeance on a perfectly inoffensive cheek. The moon had fully risen, the twisted birch-trees looked more eerie than before in the white light; a couple of owls flew from tree to tree, hooting weirdly and were answered by others in the valley; shepherds' fires burnt brightly on neighbouring slopes; the mountains were wrapped in long whisps of flat cloud. By the light of our own fire I could see that several more coolies had arrived, and that various articles of furniture were standing about in the open, but still no tent-poles or provisions; so I raked fresh wood on the fire before settling down again, and Jones came and nestled on

my lap and soon got too scorched, so went and lay the other side of me, then got frozen and came back again, and I slept on intermittently, until, when it was nearly ten o'clock, they came and woke me with the announcement that the tent was up and dinner ready, so I went inside and found Jones nestling in the centre of the bed on my fur rug, blinking in the candle light and daring me to turn him off, and as I felt that was the one place I longed to be in myself, I had not the heart to do so.

Next morning the camp and servants were despatched direct to Mahalesh, but I, Subano, Jones, and the pony made a circle first, to view the lakelets at the foot of Haramuk. Very glad I was that the pony had the lion's share of work that day, for I was footsore and very stiff from climbing; it seems unfortunate that we are not so built that one set of muscles does for everything, that one might thus keep them in constant working order. I had just been congratulating myself only a few days previously on being able to sit for five or six hours in the saddle and feel no consequent aches, and here I was, after one day's hill-climbing, as stiff as if I had lived the life of an Eastern lady all my days, sitting on a square-foot of carpet.

Wangat to Haramuk

We wound round the foot of Haramuk this morning, over long brown slopes, very impressive in their vastness. On the left rose the big mountain, looking strangely like a camel's back from the view we had of it; bare and rocky in structure, the freshly fallen snow lay above in white streaks, while the brown snow of years lay in great masses in the hollows. Haramuk sends out several spurs from his lower slopes, and in betwixt these great arms of his two or three lakes are enclosed, which are fed from the never-failing snows above and trickle away in mountain torrents. The first small lake we reached was of a lovely blue under the clear sky; two mountain spurs hemmed it in closely, and a mass of snow hung above. There was some rather deep wading to be done to get us through the flowing outlet at the lower end, and when half-way over we heard the sound of a long and indignant bay from Jones. We looked back and saw him shivering up to his shoulders in the ice cold waters, fearing to take the final plunge, and to add to his vexation a large sheep dog was derisively yelping at him from a dry rock on the farther bank. Seeing no help coming from us he at last swam for it, and then settled up scores with the offending sheep dog by chasing him all over the rocks.

Gangabal, the largest lake, lies at the extreme head of the valley, and in shape and general appearance reminded me much of Tar Sar; but whether it was that Tar Sar was my first love I cannot say, at all events Gangabal seemed to me less lovely. Haramuk loomed up large and impressive enough, it is true, but yet covered with snow as he was, the white canopy did not descend to the very edge of the lake as it did at Tar Sar. There was no lovely green ice on the water either, and backward the view down the valley was intercepted by a rising mound which cut off much of the lovely effect of the distant mountains. Still it was all very beautiful, and as I sat at the margin of the lake the guide told me how this was a great place of pilgrimage for Hindu worshippers. One week in the year they swarm up, whole families together, and camp on the shores of the lake, and bathe in its icy water. As the temperature can never be much above that of the snows which feed it, such a cold bath should surely be accounted to these devotees for righteousness.

We had rather to hurry away, so as not to reach the camping-ground after dark, and a rough, bleak ride it was, first partly retracing our steps, then striking off to the right,

and so circling round the base of Haramuk till we reached a pass over a chain of hills which confronted us. There was no pleasure in dallying over lunch that day, for though I sought the shelter of a large rock, and put on an extra warm coat, the wind found me out cruelly, and before the hasty meal was over, my hands were almost frozen; Jones too sat and shivered, the picture of misery, for he was still wet from his return swim, and I began to wonder anxiously if dogs got pneumonia and kindred ills. So we packed up and hurried on, I on foot now, for the path lay over great boulders where the pony could with difficulty be led, till we reached a steeper side of the hill where a winding path led up over the snow. Here we were suddenly sheltered from the wind, the sun came out hotly, and we were in danger of being as uncomfortably scorched as we had recently been frozen. Steep above us wound the path, mostly over boulders which the melting snow made very slippery; near the top of the pass some men were driving a flock of ponies, calling to the animals in their strange way with long whistles which much resemble the cat-calls which may be heard from the gallery of a London music-hall; save that here the sound is repeated with a monotonous reiteration

which has none of the rowdy gladness of the music-halls.

The view from the summit of the pass (over 13,000 feet) was lovely. In front lay a narrow gorge; behind spread the wide sweeping valley we were leaving. On the left were two grey hills, their sides a tumbled mass of loose stones on which was not a vestige of vegetation; it seemed as if every winter must loosen a fresh downfall of rocks from above. On the other side stood Haramuk, craggy and hard, as if no frost or storm could break a particle from his rocky surface. On this southern side, too, lay great masses of snow, filling up the crevasses.

It was a wearisome slope down from the pass, not steep, but very rocky. At last some earth, and then here and there some few tufts of grass, began to appear through the stones, making walking a trifle easier. We did not plunge down into the valley before us, but bore away to the left, where the summit of the ridge swept on in wide grassy slopes, giving a great feeling of space and freedom at this high elevation. That expression so often applied to these regions, "the roof of the world," came suddenly into my mind at sight of

this expansive tableland; it exactly conveys the impression created.

The sun was now sinking westward, and it lit up the waters of the Jhelum in the broad valley at the end of our mountain ridge, and bathed in red the distant Pir Panjal range, in which Gulmarg must have been somewhere nestling, only it was all too hazy to distinguish anything. On we went over these uplands, passing many flocks of sheep, all being led down to the lower valleys on the approach of winter. While going over a nice piece of grass my pony put his nose to the ground, and thinking he wanted a bite after his hard work, I let the rein fall loose; when, to my dismay, like Balaam's Ass, he fell down on his knees and then—(a proceeding for which he found no sanction in the Bible)—prepared to take a comfortable and leisurely roll. Luckily at the first movement I felt that something unusual was happening, and instantly jerked myself free of the stirrup and pummels, so as he rolled over in my direction I was able to roll away even faster, and then with jerks at the bridle and digs with my riding whip succeeded in stopping him before he had done any damage to the saddle, which was my one great anxiety. We reached at last, the tent

which was pitched on a commanding spot overhanging a precipice; rather an exposed spot it appeared to me, in case of a storm, but the men assured me there would be none. It was bitterly cold, however, and I resorted to my usual cold-weather form of dressing for dinner, *i.e.*, over whatever clothes I was wearing I drew on an extra coat and skirt, and though the result was not very "dressy," it enabled one to get through the evening in tolerable comfort.

That night I stood the camp a feast, consisting of a whole sheep, for which I paid three rupees; Subano told me it was "dustur" (custom) at this stage of the march, so needless to say in this land of "dustur" I meekly did as my predecessors. The men's spirits had been kept up for over two days' rough marching by this promise of a feast, and as they had given me no trouble I did not grudge it them, but it seemed to me they had chosen a singularly bleak spot for their festivities. I heard them for a brief while trying to sing and be merry, but the wind was too piercing to keep up the pretence long, and they soon curled up in their blankets and lay huddled close together for warmth. Next morning there was a thick hoar-frost over

the ground, and I found my sponge frozen to the wash-stand. In the middle of the night a somewhat curious incident happened to me. I awoke with such a deadly feeling of sickness and general discomfort that had any one appeared at the bedside and told me that I was going to die on the spot, and the world also come to an end, I should have said it was the very least I would have expected, to judge by my own symptoms. I lay wondering for some time what fatal illness had me in its grip, till all at once the soothing word "mountain sickness" came into my mind. I had heard strong men at Gulmarg complain of the sensation there, at an altitude of only 8500 feet, and I was probably a thousand or two higher here; so though the sensation continued my anxiety was at once relieved, and I reflected that if it at all resembled sea-sickness I knew the best way of coping with it, which was to firmly shut my eyes and insist on going off to sleep again; this was soon accomplished, and I awoke next morning to find myself as sound and well as ever.

CHAPTER XVIII

LAST VIEW ON THE MOUNTAINS

An early start was impossible as the tent was still stiff with frost, so we were not off till ten o'clock, and then the whole march was a laborious descent down a stony zigzag path, undoing all the toil of the way up from Wangat. We dropped over 5000 feet in three hours, on a path so covered with loose stones that there was risk every moment of spraining one's ankle; I came off with only a bad fall, which bruised both knee and ankle, and caused me much pain at the time, but left no worse effects than black marks after the first day. We again reached the Sind Valley and camped at Chitagul, a pretty village, which we reached early enough in the afternoon to allow me time to sit down, after tea, to a good hour's mending of my damaged wardrobe, which was followed by the washing of gloves and hair-brushes, and the putting out of clothes to air in the

sun. These homely interludes after several days rough marching always seemed very enjoyable; it gave a snug sense of domesticity after leading the life of a wandering gipsy so long.

We were all slack next morning after the down-hill work of the previous day, and I was glad to hear that the day's march would allow of my riding the whole way. True, it was a narrow, stony path, which would have been pronounced impossible for riding anywhere but in Kashmir, and we made it no better by trying a few short cuts; soon we hopelessly lost the track and found ourselves pushing through crops of Indian corn, so tall that it towered high above the men's heads; through fields of chillies, with the green and red pods hanging from the plants in bright array, and through numerous plantations of millet. This latter crop I was always glad to see, it recalled the fusty smell of many a bird fancier in Seven Dials, visited in school days when pennies were very scarce, and when the shop which sold two millet heads for three-halfpence had to be patronised in preference to the one which retailed them at a penny each. Once we stumbled into a corner of tomatoes, but as soon as I recognised the crop I insisted on beating a

retreat, for I have grown tomatoes myself in England, and my sympathies were with the tomato-grower, though the men assured me we would do no harm. My coolie in the search for an exit, took the bridle and dragged me up and down impossible places, with a ruthless disregard for my nerves, but indeed, when one is suddenly dropped down a four-foot bank, and jerked up six feet on the opposite side, while the pony arches his back like a cat and scurries like a machine with his feet, there is no time for nerves; I could only dig my hands firmly into his mane, which was luckily thick, and cling on for dear life, while, with whichever arm I could spare, I screened my face from the bushes which beat against me. At last we struck the path again, and followed it up through thick copse-growth which spread all over the side of the hill. Here it was difficult to find camping-ground, for the incline was steep, but at last we discovered an ideal spot just large enough for my tent; hazel bushes flanked it on either side, and horse chestnuts spread their shade above; but facing down the valley was a small open space with no trees, and this gave a glorious outlook over the way we had come, and beyond our narrow *nullah* to the big curve of the Sind valley, where the

twisting river-crawled serpent-like below us. The sun had scarcely set when the moon shone out brightly and bathed the mountain tops with a softer light; the copse became full of dark shadows, among which the smooth flat leaves of the lime and ever-green oak glistened like metal in the moonshine.

The one drawback to this idyllic spot was that the floor of the tent was on a considerable slope. We resorted as usual to stones, but even then the soup at table slipped over the rim; I had to keep one foot out sideways to balance me in my chair, and in bed I kept slipping down to the foot, and the pillows came tumbling after me. Half way through the night I missed the hot-water bottle, and found next morning that it had rolled itself out six feet down the hill, and looked very funny and European in its little red jacket out in the open. After dark a drove of cows came thundering down the hill behind us, and seemed for a moment inclined to remove the unwonted obstruction in their path, but Jones got angry and went out to settle with them, so they scattered away in the jungle. I had great hopes of seeing or hearing a bear this night, for they said the hill was full of them. It would have given me a

distinct thrill of pleasure to hear a floppy fat bear nosing round my tent in the dark, for I had heard it repeatedly stated that it is an unwritten law of bear-etiquette *never* to attack a human being unless brought to bay. Had I suspected a bear of wishing to see me under any other terms, I should have declined the interview.

This pretty spot was just as fascinating in the early morning sunshine. I put aside the tent-flaps to drink in the fresh air, and looked out into a bower of green leaves all round, and watched some brightly-marked little birds, who showed no fear of the stranger, but came hovering near my door. As I lay comfortably in bed writing up my diary, there was suddenly a noise of the crashing of branches in the copse below, and next moment some large buffaloes came pushing through the underwood and paused in fear of the tent, while, driving them onwards, came four young girls who stopped simultaneously, putting their heads together to whisper and giggle at the sight of me. Very elf-like they looked, the loose rags which hung on them, so much the colour of the tree-stems as to be hardly distinguishable in the wood; on their heads were little round caps, with large ornaments hanging over the ears like ear-

rings; their hair was straight and plaited. Graceful as they looked it was embarrassing to be stared at and discussed so openly, and after they had disregarded all my signs bidding them pass on, I ruthlessly dropped the tent-flap on feminine curiosity and left them with the bare canvas to stare at. The whispering and giggling continued some time and reached a twittering climax when I began to regale them with sounds of splashing in the bathroom, but as there was nothing further to see they soon crept with stealthy steps round the tent and slipped up the pathway after their buffaloes.

Jones caused much merriment in the camp that morning by refusing to start before the tiffin basket was put up. When my pony was ready I mounted and rode away, but Jones declined all entreaties to follow me, and remained glued to the spot watching the cook put in all the dishes; not till the last was in and the basket hoisted on to the coolie's shoulder, did he leave them to come scampering after me.

For several days Subano had been singing to me the praises of a spot at the mouth of the Sind Valley, where an unsurpassed view could be had of the whole Kashmir valley

and the mountain chains around it. Those three giant mountains Kolohoi, Haramuk, and Nanga Parbat could be seen from thence at the same time he said, and as soon as he mentioned Nanga Parbat I felt a desire to reach this spot, for as far as it is possible for a human being to fall in love with a mountain I had done so with this colossus, and had tendered him my unhesitating admiration from the moment he had loomed unexpectedly on my vision, as I was riding one day round the circular road at Gulmarg; and I had retained a vision of him towering into the sky, impressive and immense even when seen from a distance of a clear hundred miles as the crow flies.

So to this charmed spot, seldom visited by Europeans, I bade Subano lead me, and it entailed one day's march up the valley next to the Wangat Nullah, and then a steep hill to breast, the lower slopes of which we had only as yet reached. To-day we followed it up through pretty woods, where ferns of all sorts carpeted the ground; then, after an hour, emerged on to a grassy slope which commanded a fine view of the Sind Valley; here the path became too rough and steep for even my stout-hearted pony, so I dismounted, and Subano passed his turban round me, as in the climb

from Wangat, and again there was a drastic solution of the skirt problem. Though very steep and rocky, this climb was not by any means so trying as that from Wangat; it lasted only an hour and a half, in and out of pine-trees most of the time, and with a glorious view of the main valley broadening out every minute on our left. As we scrambled up this narrow track, where the rocks formed themselves into rough steps for our benefit, it reminded me vividly of the bits of landscape the old masters used to put in the background of their pictures; Albert Dürer has made us familiar with many a rocky way such as this, set around with dark pines. It is up such a path that, at Beyreuth, Elizabeth toils to the Wartburg, after failing to find Tannhäuser among the returned pilgrims. The view which met us on the top was such as would have compensated any one for many a day's climb. The hill smoothed itself out to a grassy slope which was only sparsely fringed with pine-trees. On the soft turfy ground for a couch, with a rock behind to lean on, I lay and rested on the edge of the hill, while the whole Kashmir Valley was laid out like a map at my feet. My eyes could trace the winding course of the Sind river, the flat swamps of the Anchar Lake, Srinagar with Hari Purbat and the

Takht-i-Sulaiman keeping sentry watch beside it, but both hills looking like insignificant mole mounds from this great height. Close to them was the Dhal Lake, glittering in the sun, with its semicircle of mountains around, and in the middle of the broad main valley, the Jhelum, like a slow serpent, trailed its course amidst miles and miles of golden rice fields. The blue atmosphere shimmering in the heat cast a magic spell of beauty over every thing; on the glistening Pir Panjal range alone was a bank of white clouds gathered, the rest of the heavens were a perfect blue. We were away now from the sound of rushing water, but the rustle of wind through the pine-trees was like the faint roar of the sea, and the scent they gave out in the warm sun was better almost than that of flowers. It is not often that apposite quotations come into my head at the right moment, but on this day I found myself repeating spontaneously those flowing lines of Emerson's :

> 'Twas one of the charmèd days
> When the genius of God doth flow,
> The wind may alter twenty ways,
> A tempest cannot blow.

Truly a land of beauty and plenty this, offering all that

the heart of man could wish, and as I gazed across the wide expanse below me, and over towards Aphawat in the dim distance, and tried to discern the spot where Gulmarg lay nestling, I marvelled again that people could spend so much time cooped in that one little saucer-like space, when these exquisite mountains lay around to explore.

But I had yet more to see myself, for though we had reached the summit of the hill, there still lay one higher point beyond; so after an hour's rest for lunch we started again, and the ground being grassy and undulating I was able once more to ride. We crossed a long ridge running the length of the smooth summit of the hill, then the ground dipped sharply into a broad green vale and rose again equally steep to a second ridge. Down in the vale were large flocks of brown and white sheep, and a shepherd or two; in the centre was a queer little circular pool, round which the sheep were standing drinking. As we dipped into this hollow the view opened out northwards, and there, for one grand moment, I caught a clear view of Nanga Purbat, towering in snowy whiteness over his brothers; then the near hill shut out the view, and when again he should have come into sight, he had wrapped himself, aloof and

impenetrable, in a bank of clouds, quite disdainful of the gaze of man.

Up the second ridge we toiled; it was more stony than the first, and large grey rocks lay tumbled about, with bright saffron-covered lichen growing over them. The ground must have been a net-work of flowers a month earlier, but now they were all over, and every plant was turning brown, save a pathetic little everlasting flower, which reared its withered daisy-like face everywhere, and had tiny silver leaves which reminded me of edelweis. One plant was making a brave show and growing everywhere; it looked like a giant form of our London Pride; the thick fleshy leaves had turned a bright red in their Autumn tint, and covered the hill-side with splashes of colour which showed up particularly well when growing under a few scattered silver birches.

On reaching the summit of this second ridge we found that it circled round a rocky amphitheatre, which held a patch of bright green grass down at the bottom. Here we left the pony, while I and Subano worked our way round this rocky wall, which rose up into a peak at the farther end. It was rough walking, for the rocks lay in great tumbled

blocks so that we had to jump from one to the other. As Subano was about to put his foot on one, he drew back hastily, and the next moment with his staff killed a little snake which lay coiled there, so exactly the colour of the rock that I had not noticed it, though I was standing on the same stone. Subano said it was a deadly one, but then, according to Kashmiris, all their snakes are deadly, *unless* you know the right charm to repeat over them in time. As far as my personal experience went I found the reputation of the country had been much exaggerated as regards snakes; I only met five in the course of my wanderings, one of which was certainly harmless, for after it had bitten a pet dog on the nose "the dog recovered from the bite, the snake it was that died."

For half an hour we scrambled on, then reached the farthermost summit, and lo! what a lovely view burst upon us. The whole of Kashmir could be embraced in one glance, and from this position I could trace every step of my wanderings in the Valley. At our feet lay the Wular Lake, and at its farther extremity were the mountains which close in by Baramulla; then could be followed the whole twisting course of the Jhelum up to Srinagar, and even beyond;

only the little Manabal Lake was missing, and that was tucked away out of sight beneath the mountain on which we stood. From the shores of the Wular Lake could be distinguished the great military road which leads to Gilgit, winding its lonely way through the mountains to the frontiers of the Empire; northward of this lay the ranges of Scardo; north-east of these were those of Ladakh, and as the eye roamed eastward it saw the Himalayan peaks which lie between Kashmir and Simla, while in one long unbroken chain to the south, stretched the Pir Panjal range. Round the whole horizon, circle upon circle, there stretched nothing but mountain peaks, and the highest and whitest and loftiest of all was the one which culminated in Nanga Purbat, now sulkily hiding his head from one small human admirer, who stood far off, only too anxious to do him homage. Indeed of those three big mountains, Kolohoi, Haramuk and Nanga Purbat, of whom I had grown so fond during my rambles in their country, none treated me well on this my last chance of seeing them all together; though the sky was absolutely blue over head, and there were only the smallest and fleeciest of clouds over the other mountain tops, these three giants, whose peaks I had hoped to see

reared clear up into the sky, had all gathered an impenetrable bank of cloud round their summits, which no human sight might penetrate. True, Haramuk made a tardy repentance by clearing away his veil before I reached the camp, but him I had seen most recently and cared, on the whole, least about.

This grand view of the Valley formed the culminating point of my lonely rambles, and if I have dwelt over long upon it, it is partly because it was the most beautiful sight among all the lovely sights I had seen, and also because I found no mention of it in the guide-books, and it seems very seldom visited by Europeans, though not more than three or four days' march from Srinagar; and it was only through accidentally hearing my *shikari* praising the place, that I longed to see for myself if it were half what he described. Having seen it I can truly say that the beauty of the view was not exaggerated; it is only difficult to find words to do it adequate justice.

CHAPTER XIX

SRINAGAR AND THE DHAL

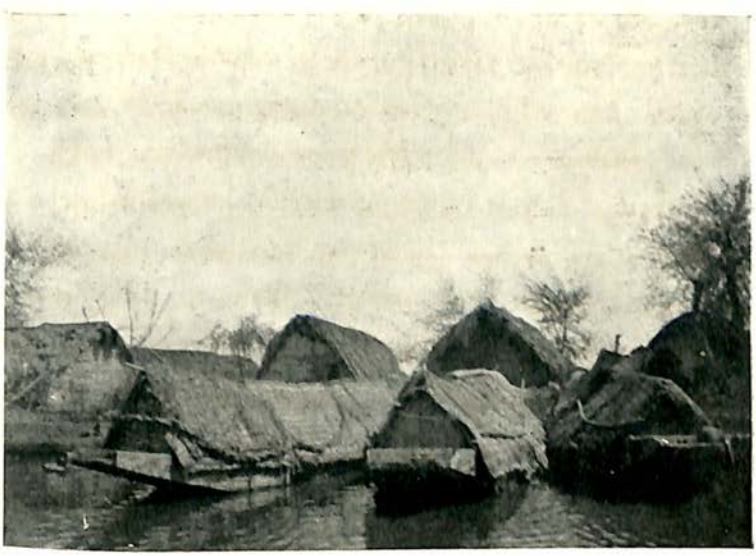
I HAD practically finished the Sind trip now; it only remained to drop down into the Erin nullah and regain the doonga which was awaiting me on the shores of the Wular Lake. We camped on the mountain that night and started early next morning; but before leaving those heights for good, I felt a great longing to see if I could not get one last look at Nanga Purbat in the clear morning air; so while the coolies started down hill, I bade Subano accompany me to a place of vantage where the view would not be impeded by the nearer hills. Subano shared none of my enthusiasm on this subject and agreed rather sulkily, but I would not be put off. We breasted a rocky hillock close by, and as we came round a curve where it was difficult to keep one's footing, the ground being so steep and stony, Subano said: "There, that is Nanga Purbat." I looked, and far away on the

horizon was a splendid mountain range from which two twin peaks rose somewhat higher than the rest, sharp and clear cut and covered with snow, but not Nanga Purbat as I remembered him as seen from Gulmarg, and I turned to Subano in disappointment and said that was not the mountain I sought. "Nanga Purbat," Subano repeated obstinately, and protested there was no higher peak; but I would not take his word for it, and insisted on going farther where we would see a wider horizon, and after not more than five minutes, while keeping my eyes on that distant chain, I was brought to a halt by seeing all and rather more than I had pictured in my mind's eye. For, some distance to the west of the twin peaks and quite dwarfing them in stature, towered the immense dome of Nanga Purbat, massive and oval in shape and wasting himself in no smaller crags, as is the way with lesser mountains. He was like a piled monument of snow from foot to summit, and in the soft morning sun it shone with a warm rosy hue. Other mountain tops of bold outline stood around him like satellites, but none which could at all rival him; there are few peaks indeed in the whole world which can compete with this mountain, for Nanga Purbat measures 26,629 feet, and has been only out-distanced

by Mount Everest. I wondered, as I sat and drank my fill of this splendid sight, whether these two giants, situated at opposite extremities of the Himalayan range, could distinguish each other over the intervening chains of hills; perhaps with mathematics it can be demonstrated to be impossible, but I liked to think the morning ray which gilded Nanga Purbat enabled him to spy far off the dome of Everest; that like two intellectual giants, these great peaks gazed aloof over barren miles of mediocrity, till their glance hailed a brother peer in the blue distance.

It would have been easy to sit for hours weaving fancies round that glorious distant pile, which appeals to the wanderer all the more for being situated in remote Asia and not in central Europe, where puffing trains could circle round its base; but there was a day's march before me, and I had to admit that Subano was right when he counselled haste, so I bade Nanga Purbat a silent farewell, with a grateful heart that he had seen fit to lift the clouds so generously from his summit, and then we dropped down hill and reached the Erin nullah, where we camped that night, and on the following afternoon reached Nohidal on the Wuller Lake where the doonga was waiting, looking snug and inviting in

FISHING ON THE JHELUM



RICE BOATS ON THE RIVER

Face p. 250

the hot sun, for down here we were once more in summer. We were not able to start till all the camp things had come in, and when the last load had been set down, and the last coolie dismissed with backsheesh, it was with genuine regret that I reflected that tenting days were over for me, for many a long day. There is something very alluring in this nomad life; the daily wander through changing scenery, the uncertainty every morning of where your head will rest that night, the pleasant stir in the camp of the coolies, the pack ponies and the luggage. Often to be sure the whole cumbersome paraphernalia of travelling is a fearful trouble; when the loads seemed endless, and the coolies fractious and unwilling, I used to wonder why Europeans could not be content to travel like the natives, a blanket over their shoulders, (which was a coat by day and a bed covering by night,) three days' supply of rice tied up in a handkerchief, and that was all; but these temporary troubles would quickly be forgotten, while the pleasure derived from the tent—the home-like greeting it extended when after a weary day one returned to find it nestling in a sheltered spot—left lasting memories. True, one learnt to do without many of the so-called necessities of civilisation, but to one reared in

the heart of a great city these temporary deprivations are usually entertaining. Newspapers and letters we did without. After a week's march in those rainy mountains the supply of bread turned mouldy and had to be replaced by whatever indigestible substitute the cook could produce; vegetables also were hardly to be had. One grew so quickly used to the use of enamel plates and cups, that when I returned to china I hardly counted it a luxury, and rather missed the familiar chips on my tin service, and thought people faddy who declared tea never tasted the same out of an enamel tea-cup. I carried but one bit of crockery, and that was a favourite little brown tea-pot; and here gratitude compels me to pause and give more than just a passing reference to this faithful brown companion who followed me round the world. Surely in these days of easy notoriety a plucky little earthenware vessel who does his marches day after day without complaining, climbs up mountains, slides down grassy slopes, comes into action twice daily, for weeks at a time, finally sails round the globe, and emerges at the end of the campaign without a chip on his spout and still carrying his handle, is as worthy a subject as many others for mention in despatches? When marching by day I took by degrees less and less in the

VILLAGE BY THE JHELUM

NEAR THE WULAR LAKE

Face p. 292

way of eating-utensils, in the tiffin basket, and more in the way of books and writing materials. One realises so soon that the palm of the hand makes a very good cup, the back can be used for a serviette, while a homespun skirt is an admirable substitute for a towel, if one meets a stray spring on the road; of course the latter suggestion sounds to the last degree slatternly, but, after all, clear mountain water is a cleaner thing than London mud, which we think no disgrace to get upon our dresses.

My trip now ended as it had begun, with a journey on the river. It was full moon the evening we reached the Wullar Lake, and after dinner the men cast off for a few hours' paddling before mooring for the night. It was almost as clear as in the daytime, only with that strange deceptive light the moon gives, which casts over the most every-day objects a tinge of unreality. We were in a kind of canal formed by the waters from the Erin Valley, working their way through low swampy ground. When the Lake is high this becomes one continuous sheet of water, but at present the water was low and grass and mud showed everywhere. Our route was lined with large barges which had come to load up with short logs of wood with which

the canal was full. These logs are cut up in the mountains, floated down the rivers in a haphazard way, remain for weeks in the water till they acquire a smooth, time-worn appearance, and are finally collected and shipped to Srinagar as firewood. At one place our passage was quite blocked with them, and we had to disturb a picturesque smoking party which sat crouched under the straw awning of one of the barges, talking, talking, talking in the endless way possible only to an Eastern gathering. "All things are at a price, but conversation is gratis," says the proverb of the country. Two of the men came out in response to our boatmen's calls, and, perching on the high sides of their craft like large birds of prey, guided a clear passage through the logs for us with their poles. In every second or third boat there seemed such a gathering, always of men-folk exclusively; in the other boats would be busy house-wives stooping over their cooking-pots or carrying on a shrill conversation with a similarly employed neighbour in the next barge. Now and then the fretful cry of a child, disturbed in its sleep, would break upon the night, but the little ones were, for the most part, quiet and invisible, tucked away somewhere in sound slumber. By far the

noisiest occupants at this time of night were the fowls, which roosted in a row on the long pent-roofs, and would suddenly start up an angry cackle as we passed. Sometimes one would be hustled out of his position by the others, and sent sliding down the roof, indignantly protesting during the whole downward course, then a storm of remonstrance would follow from the others as it edged its way back to the old place, and the whole row had the trouble of rearranging positions once more, with much pecking and ill-humour.

For two days we towed laboriously up stream, for the river was low, and we had often to steer clear of mud banks. On the afternoon of the second day we reached Srinagar. Houses, with picturesque wooden balconies supported on piles, studded either bank; women and children washing themselves and their pots thronged the steps by the water's edge; now and then a cow or pony would be brought down to drink, and go clumsily clattering up the stairs again; boats of all sizes lay moored to the shore; others, like ourselves, were moving in mid-stream; there was the tramp of many feet as we passed in turn under the seven bridges, and the babel of many voices came from the

neighbouring bazaars. We were back among humanity again after the silence of the uplands, and that always causes a curious thrill when one meets it first, half excitement, half regret. For an hour we went through this busy water-way, as much the centre of life in Srinagar as the Grand Canal is at Venice, then we passed the Maharaja's garish palace on our right, and the more picturesque metal-domed temple on our left, and so under the last bridge of the seven, which bears the stamp of the European's handiwork, and is in consequence more serviceable and harmonises less with its surroundings. Here the native town ceases, and only large business houses or the dwellings of Europeans are to be found on the right bank of the river; rows of poplars shade the path, chenar-trees and gay flowers grow in the gardens. But the scene was much less gay than when I had seen it first, five months ago, for then it was waking up for the season, now the many house-boats lining the banks were laid up for the winter. It was just five o'clock when I landed at the post office steps, and went to claim my budget of letters from the hands of the obliging native postmaster, with the good English accent and the high squeaky voice; so I betook myself to the recreation ground

Face p. 257

THE LAL MUNDI, ABOVE SRINAGAR

to see what English society was doing, and there I found it much as I had left it three weeks ago at Gulmarg; a hockey match was just over, and I was in time to congratulate the winners, and tender my condolences to a man who had just had his elbow smashed; I was in time for the unavoidable cup of cold tea, handed round by the grinning Goa boys from the hotel, whose faces were so familiar, and in time for the little pink and white cakes which seemed even more familiar; I was congratulated everywhere on my safe return, and heard how the world had wagged in my absence. Then as the light grew dim we strolled across the *maidan* to the Club House on the embankment, where the tall chenars stand overhanging the river, and people stood in groups chatting, while the glow died away westward in the sky; small boats crowded the steps, waiting to take home their owners, people called to their servants to carry the books they had chosen from the library, the dogs got in every one's way, and fought their old quarrels over again; friendly inquiries were made about Jones, and how many fights he had had lately, and we looked across the valley to the darkening chain of hills, up towards the spot where Gulmarg lay perched in its loneliness, and speculated as to

how much snow now lay on the golf-links. Then each stepped into his canoe, good-nights were called, and to the splash of paddles each one was speeded to his boat or bungalow, which, with bright lights and coloured lamp shades, looked very attractive from the outer darkness.

Native merchants thronged my boat during my last three days in Srinigar, bringing, in great scramble and haste, at the last moment, things which had been ordered months before. The Kashmiri tradesman is hard to deal with, he is for ever entreating for orders and never has them ready by the time appointed. There were a few honourable exceptions to this rule; one charming old dealer in papier-mâché, known to Europeans by the alluring name of "Suffering Moses," had written some weeks before, to say that my goods were long since ready, but that he had not been able to deliver them owing to my having, as he put it, "*decamped* from Srinagar." He meant no discourtesy by the word, but merely referred to the fact that I had moved my camp.

The last day of all I devoted to an excursion on the Dhal Lake, the most unique perhaps of all the attractions that Kashmir has to offer to the stranger. A shallow winding canal leads from the Jhelum to the large water-gates

which open into the Dhal; the rush of water is often so great through these gates that it needs the assistance of a wire rope and the exertions of many men to pull a boat through; once inside only clear water, tall rushes, and willows growing on green islands, meet the view. The Dhal is not a lake whose beauties can be taken in at one glance, its banks are so curved, its water-ways so intricate, that the traveller feels as lost as in the maze of Hampton Court. The boat glides silently along willow-lined water-ways, over water so clear that the trout can be seen swimming six feet beneath; kingfishers, golden aureoles, and many bright tinted birds dart among the trees, no whit disturbed by human approach; through the feathery willows, other boats can be seen in the distance, gliding with ghost-like silence over converging canals; often they bear fruit and vegetables into Srinagar from the floating gardens further out on the lake; more often they are piled high with rushes or leaves from water plants, which serve as food for cattle. These punts, so laden as to be down to the water-level, are propelled by a man or woman, who will sit perched on the extreme end of the bow, looking, it must be confessed, much like a monkey or vulture, and with a broad paddle draw the

water to them ; they make gentle progress this way, with no noise of splashing, and two or three go by together, holding endless monotonous converse. Sometimes the willow-hedges give place to green fields and firmer land, where three or four houses and thriving homesteads, well supplied with ducks and fowls, will cluster. Is it part of the main land or only a village placed out in the water? you ask ; but the boatmen only shake their heads at the question, and the map gives no help; all is mysterious and beautiful and unexpected in this silent land of water, where the inhabitants seem amphibious and no child is too small to wield a paddle.

On this afternoon we left these more intricate waterways behind and struck out across the open lake to where on the farther shore stands the Nishat Bagh or "Garden of Gladness," built by the Moghul Emperor Jahangir and his fair Queen, Nur Mahal. It took more than an hour's paddling, with an ever-changing view of the mountains, to cross this distance, and our boatmen did not spare themselves, for we passed many another pleasure-party, and when a rival boat is in sight the Kashmiri (so effeminate in many things) will work till he drops sooner than let the other outstrip him ; no loud cheer of encouragement is given, but a low

CANAL IN THE DHAL

WATER-COURSE IN NISHAT BAGH

Face p. 251

word passed from one to another of the crew, then each grips his paddle firmer, and the boat next minute bounds through the water with the strength of each unanimous stroke. We passed many of the so-called floating gardens, an ingenious arrangement of the Kashmiri to turn the surface of the lake into a market-garden; the rushes growing in the water are bound together, cut loose below, and then a dab of soil is placed on the top; in each little cup of earth a plant is placed, and hundreds of plants will grow thus on these green rafts, the moisture below and the warm sun above bringing all vegetation very soon to perfection; to prevent the whole structure from drifting, long sticks like hop-poles are inserted to keep them anchored to one place, and I am not sure that the unsuspecting traveller would at first notice anything peculiar about these gardens, or at a distance take them for other than low-lying ground, were it not for these poles stuck in with irregular frequency. The advantage of such an arrangement over a garden on dry land is obvious, for when the owner, for any reason, wishes to shift his site, he has only to remove the poles and tow his garden to some other part of the lake.

As the afternoon was without a breath of wind there were

many fish-spearers to be seen busily plying their trade; each one stood at the prow of his long narrow boat, motionless as a statue and gazing into the water, with a light spear poised in his right hand, while in his left he held a paddle with which he barely rippled the water as he gently propelled the boat forward; suddenly, quick as lightning, the spear would fly from his hand, there would be a splash and disturbance of the water; as often as not the spear would be drawn back empty. So frequently did this seem to happen that we stopped to ask a man what his day's catch had been, but he was able at once to display a dozen goodly-sized fish which must have weighed at least three or four pounds, showing that his aim was far from being always fruitless.

There were men, too, gathering up rushes from the bed of the lake, and curious it was to watch them; holding what appeared to be the end of a crooked punt pole, they would twist this round endlessly with a steady revolving motion, as if man and pole were going by slow clock-work; then with a mighty effort a heavy coil of plants would be brought up by the roots and landed, mud and all, into the boat; after which the end of the punt-pole again disappeared under water and the corkscrew motion began once more.

At last we reached the farther shore of the lake, the boat grounded on the bottom, and we landed at the unpretentious steps which lead, past a few booths where fruit and native sweetmeats are sold for the refreshment of travellers, to a small gateway whereby the garden is entered. The pleasure-house, which is immediately inside the grounds, faces straight out over the lake, and is a square, unpretentious building, large enough to accommodate a rajah and his retinue on an idle summer's afternoon. As in most of the Moghul summer-houses, the water from the terraces above passes in a rushing stream through the ground floor, keeping the air cool on the hottest day, and then falls away in a cascade to join the lake.

The garden behind the summer-house rises steeply up in terraces; a broad watercourse runs down the centre between two rows of cyprus, which, by their blackness, accentuate the prevailing brightness; green grass, bright beds of flowers, and the never-failing avenue of giant chenars, constitute the central and most cultivated portion of the garden. The rest of the land (right and left of the chenars) is given up to fruit trees and some idle attempts at cultivation; but here, as in Italy, Nature is so abundant that man needs to do

little save restrain her exuberance, and more lovely effects are realised by this half-negligence than are dreamt of in our trimmer Northern gardens.

The watercourses are mostly dry nowadays, save when a tip in the hands of the head garden-keeper or the presence of some grandee, causes it to come bursting joyously down from the reservoir above. But it is hardly worth the trouble of making it flow, for the dry, grass-grown channels harmonise well with the old-time memories of the place. It is not of present rulers that one thinks when sitting under the shade of these ample trees, but of the Moghuls, the warrior Emperors, who, three hundred years ago, held India in no uncertain grasp; of Akbar, who took upon him the cares of a throne at fourteen; of Jahangir and his lovely wife, Nur Mahal, who received love and honour from her royal consort beyond the measure of most Eastern women. It is round these gardens that Moore's fancy played in "Lalla Rookh," and many an Oriental poet has drawn his inspiration from them. It matters to us but little to be told that they must have changed since three hundred years ago; for we know that the lake and the mountains, the sky and the flowers, are unchangeable, and must have delighted the

A CANAL SCENE, SRINAGAR

Face p. 365

Face p. 34

KASHMIR VILLAGERS

A KASHMIR BRIDGE

HOUSES BY THE RIVER, SRINAGAR

Face p. 255

fair Eastern Queen, even as they delight us now. That is the glory of a landscape over man's handiwork—a hundred years pass, and, lo! it is as fresh as yesterday.

Sitting among the hospitable roots of a great chenar-tree we drank our tea and listened to the tinkling of some neighbouring temple bell and to the nearer laughter of our boatmen and some other natives, who were beguiling the time by walking bare-footed up the almost perpendicular slabs of stone which guided the water from one terrace to the other, the dog-tooth pattern cut in the surface affording the climbers but a precarious foothold. Gradually the sun sank westward, shadows lengthened on the mountains, the surface of the lake reflected back the evening glow, and our last day in Kashmir settled to a perfect close. We stepped into the boat once more, and were borne in the gathering twilight back to Srinagar. On the morrow followed the river journey down to Baramulla, then the long tonga drive of two hundred miles out of the country of romance, back to the duller territory of British India.

Face p. 267

THE PIR PANJAL PASS INTO KASHMIR

APPENDIX

To those who may be contemplating a visit to Kashmir, a few words as to the best method of getting there, and a rough estimate of the general cost of living, may not be unwelcome.

Most travellers sailing for Kashmir from Europe, will prefer to land in India at Bombay, rather than Karachi, though the latter place may be a few hours nearer their destination. Apart from the much greater interest of the town, Bombay is far better served with steamers than Karachi. A single ticket by P. and O. steamer from London to Bombay costs £52, first class; and £32, second class; there are other lines (such as the British India, Anchor Line, &c.) which charge less, but run less fast and less often. From Bombay the train must be taken to Rawal Pindi, with as many breaks, of course, as the traveller fancies; and the places passed are full of interest and well worth stopping for. Rawal Pindi is a large garrison town, far away in the north of the Indian peninsula, and taken without a break, the journey to it from Bombay would occupy three nights and three days in the train, and would cost nearly £6 6s.

From Rawal Pindi the real journey to Kashmir begins, for there the railway is left, and arrangements must be made for the 160 miles tonga drive along the Murree road, to Baramulla. This new Murree road is a fine piece of mountain engineering; it took ten years to

build, and was opened for traffic in 1890. It closely follows the winding course of the river Jhelum; and is the only made road into the valley; it is quite possible of course to get into Kashmir by other routes, but they are only foot-paths over the mountains, where the traveller must make his own arrangements for tents, food, and transport; therefore, though they may be freely used by those having experience, it is better for the newcomer to reserve them for his departure out of the country.

There are four recognised ways of covering the distance along the Murree road; active bachelors and single men tramp in on foot (or nowadays use a bicycle), thereby saving the cost of driving, but spending more in accommodation on the way; the road is well graduated, the scenery grand, and there are excellent rest-houses (where bed and refreshment can be had at a fixed charge), every ten to fifteen miles.

Delicate ladies, or family parties, sometimes go to the expense of a phaeton, a vehicle which rumbles along more smoothly than a tonga, but at the cost of time and many more rupees; for a tonga to hold three persons, from Rawal Pindi to Baramulla, costs R110;* while a phaeton for the same distance costs R190.

A third means of locomotion, which is often tried once, but never, I believe, a second time by Europeans, is an *ekka*. Ekkas are little native carts on two wheels, drawn by ponies; and the best ones, with gay colours, jangling bells, and studded with brass nails, look very pretty; there their attraction seems to end, for never does any one who has made a lengthy journey on them, find his vocabulary adequate to describe his sensations; and I have known men start off

A rupee = 1*s.* 4*d.*

BRIDGE AT KOHALA, WITH TONGA READY TO START, IN FOREGROUND

Face p. 264

light-hearted and full of enthusiasm for this mode of travel one day, and have overtaken them on the road the next, ready to sell their birthright, or reduce the ekka to matchwood, rather than face another day of its tortures.

However, though condemning them for their own use, most travellers make use of them freely for servants and luggage. An ekka will do the whole journey for about R20 (with probably something extra in "backsheesh" for the driver), and will take four or five days to do it in.

Lastly, their remains the *tonga*, the quickest and now most generally used mode of transit. It is not easy to convey a clear idea of a tonga, it may be best described as a low dog-cart, capable of seating four people; it has a single pole instead of two shafts, and a stout hood covers the whole, in order to keep off the scorching sun or mountain storms which may descend all in one day on the traveller. There is a good deal of room under the seat for light luggage, and there is a ledge over the wheels (outside the hood), on which luggage is also strapped. The Government sets certain limits to the weight of luggage which passengers may take with them; and even though obliging officials may not always enforce these rules too strictly, yet is it unwise to overload a tonga on the outside, as in going down hill or round a sharp curve, unless well balanced, the vehicle may upset, and then there is generally nothing more handy than a precipice or torrent to fall into.

Heavy luggage should be sent by bullock-cart, and it is well to avoid the use of large boxes, for anything heavier than can be conveniently carried by one man on a day's march will always be found a nuisance in remote parts. Boxes should, if possible, be completely

water-tight, for, besides the heavy rain they are sure to encounter, they may also occasionally meet with an accidental dip in a torrent.

The tonga service to Kashmir is in the hands of a native firm, Messrs. Dhanjibhoy and Son, of Rawal Pindi and Murree; they have a contract to carry the mails, and they also supply private tongas for the use of travellers. They have a fixed rate of charges authorised by Government, and, besides the rules already referred to about the weight of luggage, there are others about the length of time to be spent on the journey, &c., which must be observed by travellers.

Except at the beginning or end of the season, when the rush of visitors is very great, this tonga service works well and smoothly; travellers boo' their seats at Rawal Pindi, either to Baramulla, or, now that the road is completed, right through to Srinagar if desired. In the former case, a single seat in a tonga costs R36; or a whole tonga to hold three and the driver costs R110. And the thirty miles farther from Baramulla to Srinagar would cost about R7 a head. The mail tongas do the distance in two days, stopping only one night on the way; but to most people such quick going is rather tiring, and usually two or three stops are made on the journey. The rest-houses are for the most part picturesquely situated and unusually clean and well-kept for *dak-bungalows*. The cost for dinner, bed, and breakfast next morning, with tips, &c., works out at about R5 a head.

Most people heartily abuse a tonga for its discomforts, and long journeys in them are undoubtedly tiring; the seats are hard and devoid of springs, and, though the road is a good one, it is necessarily very often under repair; still, it had its compensating attractions, I thought. The horses cover the ground well, cantering up and

REST-HOUSE AT DULAI; CALLED "HONEYMOON COTTAGE"

Face p. 270

REST-HOUSE AT URI

LIBRARY
OF THE
BOMBAY
BRANCH
OF THE
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

down hill gaily, to the sound of jangling bells; the driver sounds his horn and is answered by other unseen horns, coming in the opposite direction. At every eight or ten miles a break is made to change horses, during which a stroll, and rest from the cramped position of sitting, can be had. The start with the new horses is frequently sensational, for in the early part of the year these are apt to be spirited and only half broken in. Then comes the break at some picturesque rest-house for lunch, when it is pleasant to get away for a time from the glare and dust of the road; or, if a tiffin-basket accompanies the party, a halt can be called by the wayside under trees; there is the ever-changing scenery, with high mountains and wooded slopes, and here and there an old fort or ruined temple. The rushing river is never far away, and now and again it is spanned by a rickety rope bridge, whereon natives may be seen painfully and slowly making a perilous crossing; in the evening, when the last stage is done, comes the welcome rest and bath at the rest-house.

Grumblers will say that the reverse side to this picture is, that, should the journey be made before April, the road is liable to be blocked by snow, or the bridges broken down by last winter's avalanches; if made in the height of summer, the road is painfully hot and dusty; and, thirdly, if made when the seasons are most agreeable, the rest-houses are sure to be overcrowded by visitors. All these ills are possible, and are to be looked upon as the chances of travel; but, in any case, whether good or ill luck attend him, the visitor is generally glad when he comes in sight of Baramulla.

Baramulla is thirty-one miles short of Srinagar by road, and is the spot where the mountains open out with a wide sweep and allow room for the undulating plains of the Kashmir valley; through this

fair vale (about 80 miles long by 25 broad) the river runs with sufficient smoothness to be navigable; and so the first sight which greets one at Baramulla is a thick array of doongas and house-boats, lining the bank. Though four hours more would take the traveller to the capital, most people prefer to be met here by their house-boats and exchange the easy, gliding motion on the water for the dust and jolting of the tonga.

House-boats and doongas are best hired through the English Agency at Srinagar. For a very slight charge Cockburn's Agency there will hire a house-boat, have it inspected and thoroughly cleaned, engage the boatmen, stock it with furniture and provisions if needed, and send the whole thing to meet the traveller on the appointed day at Baramulla, accompanied, if desired, by an interesting letter of advice as to the best itinerary to pursue on the way up to Srinagar.

Like most English travellers I made large use of Cockburn's Agency during my stay in Kashmir, and found it essentially useful. If short of bread, vegetables, groceries, or money, in a far-away valley, a coolie can be despatched hot-foot to the Agency, which will see that he returns in the shortest time possible, to any appointed place, bringing the necessary goods with him. House-boats, tents, furniture (and even servants), can all be thus engaged by letter before entering the country, at a great saving of trouble to oneself. Though there are also a few native merchants who would supply the same things, it is doubtful if a novice would fare well at their hands; they are best left to old inhabitants who are well up in current prices.

Those who find the life agreeable can while away many a pleasant week on the water between Baramulla and Srinagar. There is, first, the Pohru River, leading up to the Lolab district, to be

explored; then the large Wular Lake (about thirty miles in circumference) to be skirted; next the much smaller, but very pretty, Manasbal Lake, with the temple under water, to be seen; afterwards the Sind River can be ascended as far as Gonderbal; and, besides these, there are many side channels in the Anchar Lake (a low, marshy swamp rather than a lake); and the Nuru Canal, for those who wish to see everything.

There is good fishing to be had both on the Wular and at Gonderbal, where *mahseer* fishing is spoken of with enthusiasm by anglers; and for other sportsmen, a day's march up the mountains with a light load of tents will bring them in touch with bears, *barasingh*, *markhor*, and other game in their seasons, though with the increasing number of visitors these are all growing scarcer year by year. Col. A. E. Ward's "Tourist and Sportsman's Guide to Kashmir and Ladakh"; and Col. Kinloch's "Large Game Shooting in the Himalayas" (both published in Calcutta), will be found useful to those who have not hunted these districts before.

House-boats cost more by the month than tents, but even so, living in them is not expensive. A small house-boat of three rooms, with just sufficient furniture to get on with, can be had for about R50 a month. This includes the crew, but, if constantly moving, one or two extra men would be needed to work the boat, at R6 each per month; added to this, a cook-boat for servants and cooking would be almost a necessity, and would add another R15 to the monthly expenditure. Such an estimate would work out at R77 a month (about £5); but, of course, if one of the larger and handsomer boats (such as are now being freely built by the English residents) is required, then the cost would be two or three times as much.

Living doongas, for Europeans, can be hired for R15 or R20 a month, according to size, and, personally, I liked them in the summer more than a house-boat; they were picturesque and seemed to suit the country better; but they would be cold in the early part of the year, and during my time in Kashmir it was fashionable for dwellers in house-boats to look down on them.

Two, or perhaps three, personal servants would be wanted (cook, bearer, and sweeper; or cook-bearer and sweeper), at an average of R10 to R12 a month each; and, if they are taken up in the mountains, they should be given a warm coat and perhaps a blanket. Indian servants are expected to supply their own food out of their wages, but, if they are taken long journeys in inaccessible places, a few pence extra a day for food should be allowed, or provisions given them.

The likely cost of the traveller's own provisions is more difficult to state, as it would vary considerably with place and season; but I estimated that an average of R3 a day well covered my living expenses. Groceries and all English stores are dearer than at home or in British India; on the other hand, meat, milk, eggs, and fuel are cheap. Official lists of current prices are now posted up in Srinagar and a few other places, so it is no longer necessary for the newcomer to be cheated.

When the traveller has exhausted the pleasures of the river life he will probably make some stay at Srinagar, and there get ready his camping outfit for going up into the hills. At Srinagar such full information, both about itineraries and every other subject, can be obtained, either at the Agency or from other English residents, that it is needless to enter into elaborate details here, but a brief forecast of the probable expense of camp life may be acceptable.

Appendix

Tent life in itself is cheaper than river life. For the use of a cosy little tent, 10 feet by 10 feet, the hire of a single set of furniture, and two small servants' tents, I paid monthly R23. This is considerably less than the hire of a house-boat, but on the other hand the outlay for coolies on the march makes a rather formidable item, and the great charm of tent life is to be constantly moving. For the transport of the tents and furniture above mentioned, with my own personal luggage, stores for a few weeks, and the servants' bedding, I was never able to do with less than twelve or fourteen coolies. Each coolie has to be paid at the rate of four annas a stage (about *4d.*); and with the extra hire of a riding pony for myself, I found my travelling expenses amounted to between R3 and R4 a day. (Baggage ponies carry twice as much as coolies, but cost also as much again; *i.e.*, eight annas a day.) A single man, travelling with fewer encumbrances, ought, I think, to do with less than the above; but then, on the other hand, he would probably be hampered with guns and sporting things.

The question of how much paraphernalia (in the shape of house-linen, enamel ware, saucepans, &c.) to bring into the country, is always a difficult one, and can be argued both ways. As already stated, everything one wants, from tents downwards, can now be bought or hired in Srinagar; and though, of course, the prices there are higher than they would be in British India, yet the expense and trouble of carting the things in is thereby saved. Having myself gone to the trouble of importing a good deal of linen and hardware, I am inclined to favour the opposite method, of leaving everything to be procured on the spot; most travellers of any standing will agree that the pleasure of travelling light comes in the end to outweigh all other considerations.

The same remarks hold good about servants; these latter (sometimes good, but mostly bad) can be engaged at Srinagar; on the other hand, servants imported into the country, at considerable expense and trouble, may turn out no better. Many a servant who is excellent in the plains, among his own familiar surroundings, will prove totally unsuited to the rough and tumble of camp-life; or, again, being accustomed to the heat of India, will knock up in the cold and wet of the mountains.

One item I never regretted was a somewhat heavy outlay for aluminium saucepans; but, though they cost more than others to start with, they are so much in request that they can always be disposed of afterwards second-hand; and in a country where one's thoughts are much devoted to avoiding cholera and typhoid, it gives a great sense of rest to know that, however dirty the cook may leave his vessels, one is not likely to come to a violent death by poisoning, after each meal.

Water and milk should invariably be boiled before using, and, though this may seem a vexatious formality, it is as well not to be beguiled by a babbling stream into breaking this golden rule. I confess that myself I was driven to do so more than once by thirst, and with no bad consequences; but it is never wise, for even right up in the mountains it is seldom one can feel assured that there is no polluting village or encampment of shepherds higher still, and then, if the worst consequences should happen, it is only an aggravation of punishment to feel that one's death is upon one's own head.

A stout waterproof covering and strong straps should be taken to protect the bedding; this is a package which looms large on all Eastern journeys, and can seldom be reduced to convenient

dimensions. Not only are pillows and warm blankets necessary, but also a thick felt rug or cotton quilt, to take the place of a mattress, so that a large bundle is inevitable.

Blue spectacles and veils are often needed when going for many hours over the snow; and many people advise mosquito-nets for the valley. My personal experience was that I conscientiously dragged one about for six months without once finding occasion to unroll it, and eventually sold it to a friend at Karachi. Still the advice given me may have been good, and had my itinerary been different I might have been glad of it.

Both warm and thin clothing should be taken, for with change of elevation, great extremes of temperature may be experienced in one day; a pith helmet should be taken for the sun, though the broad-brimmed *puttoo* hats made in the country will be found very serviceable on all occasions; they are good for fair weather and foul.

People who are content to go no further than Srinagar and Gulmarg will find good accommodation at the two hotels kept by Nedou and Sons. The inclusive charge during the summer I was there (1901) was R5 a day. There are no other hotels as yet in Kashmir.

Cheques can be cashed both at the Punjab Bank, which has a branch at Srinagar, and at Cockburn's Agency. It is well to have a stout bag for carrying money, for on camping expeditions a great quantity of small change is needed. It is better to pay each individual coolie his due, rather than give a large sum to the head man to divide; so, often before starting, the traveller will see his whole monthly expenditure ranged before him in twopenny and

fourpenny pieces, and feel much like the king in his counting-house in the nursery rhyme.

It is impossible to dogmatise about the cost and mode of living for others, each one's tastes and methods are so different. The foregoing remarks are merely the outcome of my own personal experience in Kashmir; every one will find reason to modify them for his own use. Taken as a whole it is a cheap country to live in when the initial expense of getting there is once over; but one thing should be noted, viz., that in my time, and I believe since, prices, both in the matter of wages and provisions, were tending steadily to rise, therefore what applies now may not be true some years hence.

A few words remain to be said on the subject of maps, which, in a country devoid of railways and main roads, play an important part in the traveller's outfit. It is cause for regret that in this matter Kashmir is not better supplied, the maps in the guide-books of Lawrence, Neve, Collet, Kinloch, Ince, &c., being mostly too small or roughly drawn to be of more than general use in giving the respective positions of the main places. For exact detail of mountains, rivers and valleys, the traveller must rely on the ordnance map, known as "the Atlas of India"; of this separate sheets, on a scale of four miles to the inch, are sold (unmounted) for two rupees, and for the main part of Kashmir sheet 28 will suffice; but if Jummoo and the more southern districts are needed, then sheet 29 will also be required.

The survey for this map was made by the Trigonometrical Branch of the Survey of India, during the years 1856–1860; and though it has been reprinted from time to time, professedly with new

additions, these are practically unimportant, and the map remains as it was issued, over forty years ago. Topographically it is satisfactory enough, but in the matter of place-names and new roads it is full of deficiencies; the sheet fairly bristles with names, half of which would be difficult nowadays to identify, while places which seem to us now important are unnoticed on the map. To take a few instances: the Murree cart road, which was begun twenty-four years ago, and has been open for traffic fourteen years, is not yet marked, though it is now the great highway into the country; there is a path marked on the map as following the left bank of the Jhelum downwards from Baramulla, but this refers to the old foot-path, and leaves the river abruptly at Kotli.

Again, the Dhal Lake has loomed large in the estimation of visitors to Kashmir, from the time of the Moghuls and earlier; it is a sheet of water measuring roughly five miles by two; yet on the map there is no indication of it. True it is left to the intelligent observer to surmise the existence of water in the neighbourhood, from the fact of the Isle of Chenars (a plot of land about the size of a suburban back garden) receiving prominent mention, but the fact of the island does not prove the extent of the water.

There must have been many travellers like myself who have felt perplexed at finding *Wangat* wrongly placed in a neighbouring nullah to the west, instead of on the Kanknai river, and wondered what had become of the two well-known temples they were seeking; this error has been pointed out more than once in guide-books, but is still unrectified in the issue of 1901.

Bandipur, the important depot for Gilgit, is not marked, and so on—the list could be extended to a much greater length. Many

places entered quite correctly on the map are difficult to identify owing to the eccentricities of spelling favoured by the Survey. Speaking on this point, Dr. Stein says: "At the time when this portion of the 'Atlas of India' was prepared, no fixed system of transliteration had been adopted by the Survey of India. Kashmiri sounds are, for the untrained ear, often difficult to catch, and their adequate reproduction would not be easy, even with the system of spelling now observed by the Survey Department. It is only too evident that the surveying parties could have had but scant knowledge of Kashmiri, and that many local names were taken down, not from the mouth of the genuine inhabitants, but as pronounced, *i.e.*, transformed, by Punjabis and other foreigners." And speaking elsewhere of the spelling, Dr. Stein characterises it as "defective and in need of revision."

"Defective and in need of revision" will be the judgment passed upon it by all who have much used the Trigonometrical map; and though it may be part of a deep-seated policy of the Indian Government to keep all but themselves in ignorance of the paths and roads on the frontiers, yet the bewildered traveller, not reflecting that he is suffering for his country's good, is apt to grow impatient after he has discovered one or two errors, and (as in the story of the boy who cried "wolf") will give no credence when the truth is spoken.

The "Route Map of the Western Himalayas" is a good map of its kind; but as the name implies, it is intended more for military purposes, and the scale (32 miles to the inch) makes it too small for much practical use in daily marches.

People desirous of learning something of the ancient geography

of Kashmir, while at the same time obtaining a map for daily use, might with advantage purchase a copy of Dr. Stein's "Memoir on the Ancient Geography of Kashmir." Besides the interesting letter-press, this contains a good separate map of the country, the groundwork of which is based on sheet 28, and part of sheet 29, of the "Atlas of India," while in distinctive red lettering are inserted all the important places mentioned in Kalhana's "Rajatarangini." This "Memoir" is published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and can be bought in Calcutta for four rupees; or in London, through the agents of the Society (Luzac and Co., 46 Great Russell Street, W.C.), for 6s.

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
London & Edinburgh

00065888

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

Digitized with financial assistance from

HT Parekh FOUNDATION

An Initiative by HDFC

WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 15 October, 2018